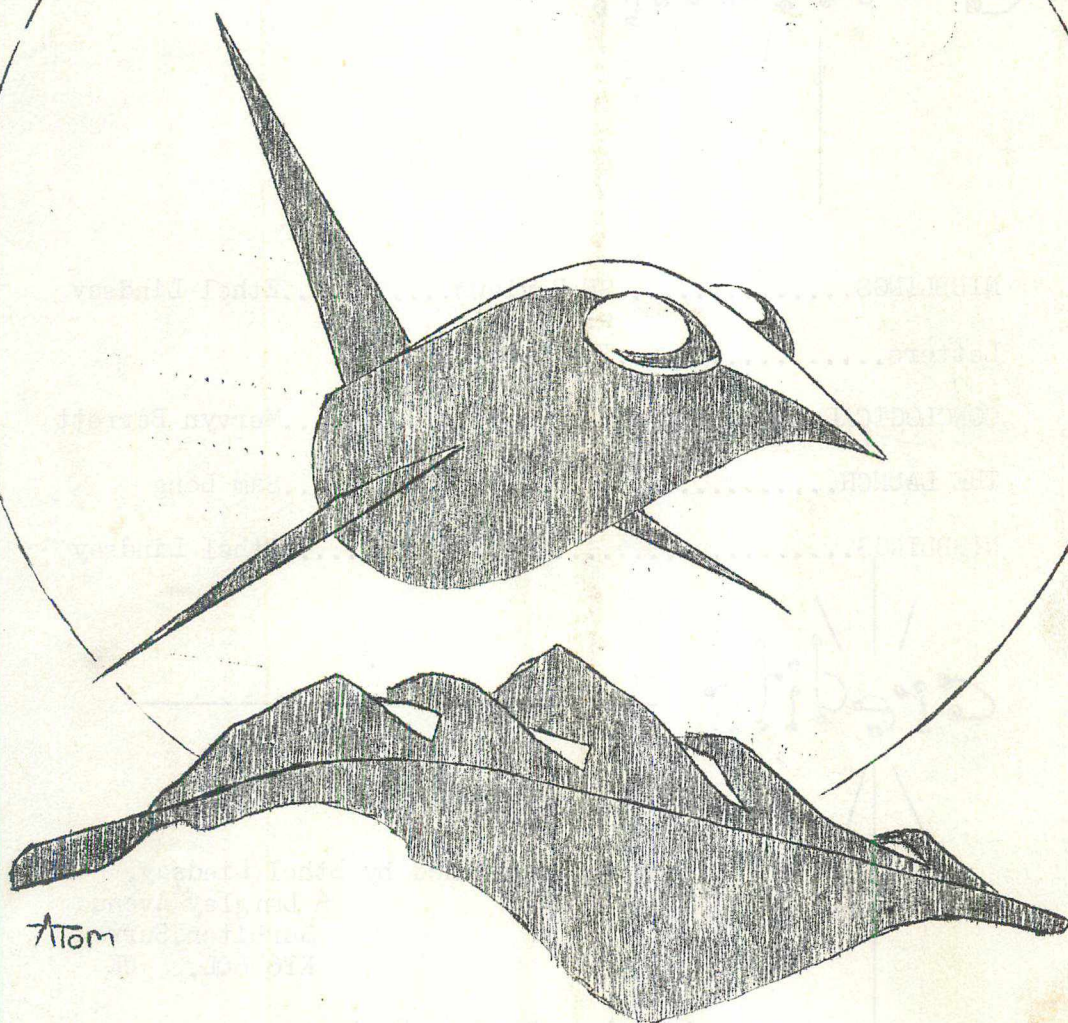


Scottish



Atom

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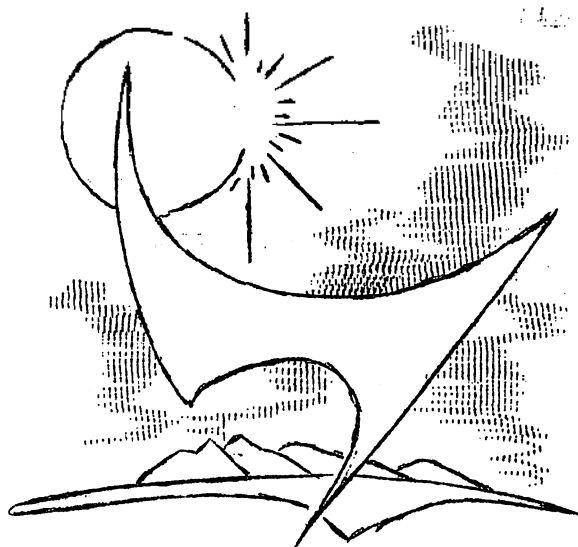
ALL ARTWORK BY ATOM

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Nibblings



BEDLAM PLANET By John Brunner. Sidgwick & Jackson. £1.75. When colonists land on the planet Asgard they were in three ships, one of which crashed. Malone was a pilot planned to take back a ship to Earth—the crash made him an unwilling colonist. We mainly see through his eyes the problem that awaits them all - not the usual hazards of a space opera but the intriguing one of -can a human society start off a new 'culture'. Can humans turn from their roots, produce new men? An interesting handling of a point that is often overlooked in the space adventure type of story.

BEYOND CONTROL Edited by Robert Silverberg. Seven Stories of SF. Sidgwick & Jackson. £1.95. The theme used to string these stories together is that of man's hubris, and Silverberg makes good use of it. Having such a theme, however, tends to make the stories collected a battery of tragic endings. Undoubtedly the grimmest is DEAD PAST by Asimov who sees an invention that brings an end to human privacy. Silverberg runs him a close second with THE IRON CHANCELLOR in which a robot takes his instructions too seriously. In ADAM AND NO EVE Bester shows how it is possible to combine a tragic and yet a hopeful ending. If this were a competition, I'd award it first prize for that.

NEW WRITINGS IN SF NO 23 Edited by Ken Bulmer. The emphasis on new writing is well maintained which makes this stand out among a sea of anthologies. Young authors should find it the most encouraging project in the SF field. Keith Roberts starts off with THE LAKE OF TUONELA a fine piece of writing which describes an alien canal-system even as it comments on the effects of one culture against another. WAGTAIL IN THE MORNING by Grahame Leman is very cynical about the future; brain-surgery to keep us all docile; this one is too cynical for me! MADE TO BE BROKEN by Ted Tubb sets out to entertain and makes a nice change by doing just that. THREE ENIGMAS by Brian Aldiss are like abstract paintings in words and either they touch a chord in the reader or they do not. They leave me cold—they may set your imagination alight. THE SEED OF EVIL by Barrington J. Bayley is the longest item and shows sensitive handling of an old theme. In this the alien has the immortality that Julian seeks and in the struggle between them we begin to see the shadow of an old struggle between good and evil. Sidgwick & Jackson, £1.75
DAW BOOKS. Paperbacks..all at 95¢.

No 61. THE WRONG END OF TIME by John Brunner. An exciting story that keeps moving. A future America—isolated and ruled by the military is infiltrated

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by a Russian. He has come hoping to find the answer to the problem of aliens who seem bent on destroying Earth. As always, Brunner writes against a well-thought out background that fascinates with its probability. The mystery of the characters and the closely woven plot hold the attention throughout.

No 62: WHEN THE GREEN STAR CALLS by Lin Carter. The dedication says "For Scott Bizae who likes an old-fashioned yarn"; and indeed this is a very good description. For this is fantasy in the Burroughes tradition where one is taken swiftly to strange lands where the hero undergoes many trials and gets out of one set of troubles only to encounter another. Told with gusto.

No 63 THE BOOK OF PHILIP JOSE FARMER. A fine and dazzling collection headed by MY SISTER'S BROTHER that unique conception of an alien biology. Another weird one is ALLEY MAN about the last of the Real Men. Some stories are Real Gothic--such as FATHER'S IN THE BASEMENT which made me shudder. All enlivened by the author's remarks about each story chosen.

No 64. TESTAMENT XXI by Guy Snyder. A picture of the world after a devastating war as seen by a returning astronaut. He becomes entangled in the King's affairs and in the end finds himself left with a dead King--a static culture shattered -- and the King's regalia in his hands. Looks like a sequel coming!

No 65 WARRIOR OF SCORPIO by Alan Burt Akers. This continues the story of Dray Prescott where high adventure is the rule. Dray is moved by the Star Lords but never allows them to completely rule his destiny. Torn from his path and his beloved Delia, he shakes his fist at his fate and marches off again!

No 66 PANDORA'S PLANET by Christopher Anvil. In this amusing tale the alien Centrans had been conquering planet after planet till they reached Earth--and discovered that Earthmen were more intelligent --the first such species they have met. Ingenious handling makes this a very funny tale. It also keeps you reading to see who makes out best in the end. But there is a decided twist in the tail of the tale.

No 67 THE LORD'S PINK OCEAN by David Walker. Two families are isolated in an untouched valley whilst the rest of the world has been ruined by mutated algae. The families survived in trouble; and trouble persists. First, because one lot is white and the other black--so that the fathers forbid friendship between the two children. Then trouble comes when a helicopter arrives from a small colony of Eskimos. Very subtle at times and the characters always intriguing.

No 68 STARMASTER'S GAMBIT by Gerard Klein. Algan is a man of Earth forcibly made to travel into space. He discovers that he is a pawn moved on a gigantic chess-board by the powerful ones of Betelgeuse. They have sent him searching for answers--was there a race before their own? Is there a challenge to their power in the universe? The answer Algan brings back they find shattering. Breadth of vision in the plotting of this one.

No 69 THE PRITCHER MASS by Gordon R. Dickson. Again the theme of a contaminated Earth is used. There is, however, paranormal power, hopefully to be used in the Mass to find a new world. Chaz is trying to be accepted as a part of the Mass and finds many obstacles strangely put in his way. When he at last achieves his ambition it is to find that things are quite different from what he had been led to believe. An original notion finely thought out by the author.

No 70 THE HERO OF THE DOWNWAYS by Michael G. Coney. Though we are mainly concerned with the heroine Shirl whose growing-up we watch in the underground world where mankind now lives. A hero is needed though to slay Daggertooth as a hero had once before. It is Shirl's job to teach John--A the "vat-kid" to be the second hero. All the ramifications of this plot are slowly displayed and surprises come right to the end. I couldn't put this one down!

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No 71 HUNTERS OF THE RED MOON by Marion Zimmer Bradley. Dane was minding his own business till he is kidnapped to be prey for a hunt. The standards of the hunt were fair, but although given the best weapons and time to practice the 'prey' had one big handicap. The hunters could appear in any shape or form! Apart from the breathless hunt itself, there is the puzzle of the hunters to unravel. Mystery plus adventure.

No 72 FROM THIS DAY FORWARD by John Brunner. A collection of 13 stories. The author describes them as being about people to whom "very suddenly, the future happens. The future that closes like the jaws of a trap.". From the tale of Royston who is very much the bitter bit in THE BIGGEST GAME to THE INCEPTION OF THE EPOCH OF MRS BEDONEBYASYOUDID the future that rears up is **very grimly** retributive.

CAP KENNEDY no 1. Daw Books. 75c. GALAXY OF THE LOST by Gregory Kern. A new space hero series to rival Rhodan. Kennedy is a Free Acting Terran Envoy and this first adventure moves briskly as he sets out to find why spaceships are disappearing without trace.

THE HOUSE IN NOVEMBER by Keith Laumer. Sidgwick & Jackson. £1.95. The hero Mallory wakes up one day and gradually discovers that for the last three months he has been mentally enslaved by an alien invasion of his town. He then discovers that he cannot help the other humans to become free. When he gets outside the town he finds soldiers who think they are fighting Communists, others who think the devil had become manifest, and everyone he meets convinced he is suffering from hallucinations. The tension is very well maintained and the plot twists ingenious.

FLIGHT FROM TIME ONE by Deane Romano. Sidgwick & Jackson. £1.95. I am always willing to suspend my belief to enjoy a story but at the outset this one asks too much of me. We are introduced to 'astralnavts' - "men who shiplessly fly their souls into an astral dawn". It starts with Stang being briefed for a rescue mission - all in the jargon used by the military.. psychport, psychpit.. If you like to speculate on the dimensions of time; on the possibility of man leaving his body for an astral flight - then you'll enjoy this. I can't say I did; I never lost my initial disbelief.

SONG OF RHIANNON by Evangeline Walton. Pan/Ballantine pb. 40p. The third volume of the Mabinogi based on Welsh myths. These myths are woven into adult fantasy with fine embroidery. At the same time the characters are more human in their speech and reactions than is usual in this genre. At last this series gives the name of the cover artist.. David Johnston. He enhances the attractive appearance of the books immensely.

ORLANDO FURIOSO by Ludovico Ariosto. Translated by Richard Hodgens. Lin Carter's introduction tells us that it was written in Italian in 1503. Its importance historically in that it was written in Italian and not in Latin. The age of chivalry told with enthusiasm and quite a bit of fun. Magic and knights and ladies and a large cast of characters. This is vol. 1.. more to come, so get this one if you like your fantasy to be given plenty of space for swashbuckling! Also from Pan/Ballantine Adult fantasy series. 40p

THE UNDEAD: VAMPIRE MASTERPIECES. Edited by James Dickie. Pan. 30p. 13 pieces with a fine introduction giving the history of vampire lore by the editor. Some of the names will be familiar.. Bram Stoker, Clark Ashton Smith, and Lovecraft, but there are others less easy to find and equally as gruesome!

THE BEST OF ARTHUR C. CLARKE. 1937-1971. Sphere Books. 40p. The author gives an introduction that tells about his early writing experiences - and reminds us that he started In fact he includes some stories here that

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first appeared in a fanzine. It is a very comprehensive collection from his early years till 1971, showing his varied talent.

THE BEST OF ROBERT HEINLEIN. Sphere Books. 40p. 8 of his best short stories which includes that classic THE ROADS MUST ROLL. And that lovely story of THE MAN WHO SOLD THE MOON is one I can always re-read.

THE BEST OF ISAAC ASIMOV. Sphere. 40p. This selection runs from 1939-1972, and deserves its title as it includes NIGHTFALL; and many others that deserve to be in SF's Hall of Fame.

THE BEST OF JOHN WYNDHAM. Sphere Books. 40p. My favourite in this one is PAVLEY'S PEEP HOLES - where a town finds itself infested with gawping tourists from the future, and takes a novel way out of their predicament. These four collections from Sphere are enhanced by a bibliography of each author.

CANDY MAN by Vincent King. Sphere. 35p. Nicely set to keep you in a puzzle as the Candy Man tells his story and you try to figure this biazzare future. The Candy Man is pursued by machine Teachers, a Girl who helps and then tries to destroy him and a Boy who chases him vindictively. This author has a fine imaginative approach to a possible future.

CITY OF ILLUSIONS by Ursula K. LeGuin. Panther SF. 35p. A future Earth where mankind can only exist in small communities and are dominated by the Shing. Then one community finds a man who has no memory of how he came to be alone in the forest. After they care for him he sets out to find the City of the Shing. The major part of the book is about his journey and very much in the style of the fantasy tales which feature the journey so much. I found it a bit tedious; although the author has still all her writing skill.

THE EARLY ASIMOV. Vol. 1 Panther SF. 35p. This is the first of a three volume series. Quite a showcase and enlivened by the author's description of the background to the publication of the 8 stories chosen. These came out in the early forties and are real collectors items.

DESTINY DOLL by Clifford D. Simak. Sidwick & Jackson pb. 40p. Rather an odd one - Ross has taken on an expedition which he really distrusts. It consists of wealthy woman, a Friar and a blind man who hears 'voices' which are to lead them to - what? In the event they land on a planet that turns out to be a closed world from which there is apparently no escape.

OUT OF THEIR MINDS by Clifford D. Simak. Sidwick & Jackson. 40p. Horton Smith reads a note left by a dead friend, and is introduced to the theory that what man's imagination has created may become alive. Goblins, werewolves, even the Devil himself appear to make a fascinatingly fantastic tale of adventure for Horton. Amusing as well as ingenious

THE HOLLYWOOD NIGHTMARE edited by Peter Haining. Sidwick & Jackson. 40p. Has an introduction by Christopher Lee, who should certainly appreciate a real horror story. I haven't read one of them before; and thought them all fine and original. The background of Hollywood that is used in them works out very well. In a strange way Hollywood adds reality to the stories... strange indeed as we know of Hollywood as the home of fantasy!

CONEHEAD by Gardner F. Fox. Ace pb. 95¢ Commander Slater helps a young girl out of trouble on the planet Gothon and discovers a whole system of racial discrimination against humans who had been changed by living on the planet. They are being treated as slaves, till Slater finds they hold the key to a great development. Rather glib in parts and fairly predictable.

FUTURE GLITTER by A.E. Van Vogt. Ace. 95¢. Nothing predicatble about this one! A future dictaorship is threatened by 'pervasive communication' which would show the dictator's every move throughout the world. The whole concept of

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communism is examined here-and how one-man rule could produce some good results. The main action, however, is confined to the palace intrigues and we closely watch the hero make his cautious way among them. The usual Van Vogt loose ends float around; and the snap ending leaves you wondering what happened next. But excellent for not-put-down-ability!

CARSON OF VENUS by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Ace. 95¢. Fantastic adventure.

PERRY RHODAN No 31 has REALM OF THE TRI-PLANETS by K.H. Scheer. No 32 has CHALLENGE OF THE UNKNOWN by Clark Darlton. No 33 has THE GIANTS PARTNER by Clark Darlton. No 34 has SOS: SPACESHIP TITAN! by Kurt Brand. All issued by ACE at 75¢. Popular space-dramas with plenty of action and excitement.

THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER by A.E. Van Vogt. Ace. 95¢. Gripping tale that sits among the best of SF. I guess it can be re-issued forever.

ENVOY TO NEW WORLDS by Keith Laumer. Ace. 95¢. The amusing story of Retief who finds more trouble from his superiors in the Diplomatic Corp than from the aliens with whom he has to deal.

WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM by Keith Laumer. Ace. 95¢. An alternate world story that keeps the hero busy when he is kidnapped and set to kill his mirror image!

SWORDS AND DEVILRY by Fritz Leiber. Ace. 95¢. The first in the Fafhrd and Gray Mouser saga, which tells of their meeting and their first swashbuckling adventures. Humour and fantasy nicely belnded.

HUON OF THE HORN by Andre Norton. Ace. 95¢. This one is about our own legendary history and features Huon of Bordeaux. Heroic fantasy combining swordplay and magic, showing another facet of Norton's skill.

PLAGUE SHIP by Andre Norton. Ace. 95¢. Due to treachery the SOLAR QUEEN finds itself a plague ship and ordered to be destroyed on sight. In the end they set down on the only safe spot -Terra -right in the middle of a radioactive patch of land!

WAR OF THE WING-MEN by Poul Anderson. Ace. 95¢. A tale featuring van Rjin is bound to be enetraining as is this one where he is castaway on a planet with his space-pilot and Lady Sandra. The inhabitants are at war and in no mood to help the Terrans. van Rjin cunning is sorely needed!

MORE DAW BOOKS...CAP KENNEDY nos 2&3 are now out both at 75¢. Kennedy, Secret Agent of the future, finds slavery to combat in the one and a planet that may have found pre-galactic science to straighten out in the other.

No 73. BREAKING POINT by James Gunn. 8 stories. A fine mixture yet with the theme of man reaching a breaking point running through them all.

No 74. JONDELLE by E.C. Tubb. Dumarest continues his quest for Earth which everyone tells him is legendary only. This time he gets a bit nearer, at least he reaches a planet where there are people who have tales of an Earth. Before he can get further however he has first to pursue kidnappers. Again plenty of imaginative planetary adventures.

No 75. THE CRYSTAL GRYPHON by Andre Norton. The story of half-human Kérován who aspires to the throne of Ulm has all the magic fantasy-lovers seek.

No 76. ONE-EYE by Stuart Gordon. A norm-society that kills mutants is in danger of dying out..then ne-Eye is born and lives. Odd tale, blend of science and magic with the author's imagination strongly at work.

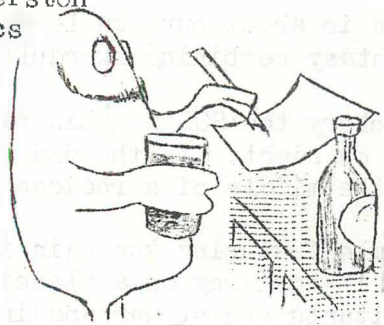
No 77. THE END OF THE DREAM by Philip Wylie. One for the conservationists and very timely. His last book gives a grim picture of an earth that has recklessly used all its resources and where a few struggle against the odds.

No 78. BEANSTALK by John Rackham. An amusing idea to take the story of Jack & the Beanstalk and give it a new twist..an SF element!

Letters

Bob Shaw

31 Birchwood Drive
Ulverston
Lancs



"Many thanks for the latest issue of "S"--the eternal fanzine. I'm writing this in the office at lunchtime and haven't got the issue with me, so I can't make detailed comments. I do seem to remember, however, your comment that you had received only two letters about the previous issue. I was reading it in bed and as I turned out the light I thought to myself(I find it very difficult to think to somebody else):That's a disgrace --if British fandom isn't careful Ethel will get discouraged, and she'll stop publishing, and I must ask Sadie to get me a new pillow, and the clods will have only themselves

to blame. Then it dawned on me that I was one of the clods who had never written a loc, that the only thing wrong with my old pillow was that I'd left a copy of David Gerrold's latest book--"How I wrapped Up My Manuscript for Mailing to Star Trek" -- under it, and that I should do something about it at the first opportunity. I did. I put the book down on the floor beside "The Trouble With David Gerrold" by Mr.Spock, and promptly went to sleep.A few minutes ago, though, it all came back to me(this happens frequently after a lunch in Vickers' canteen) and I sat down at the keyboard to compose a letter to you. Now comes the big question--what do I write about? I could say how much Sadie and I enjoyed Ella Parker's account of her trip to the States. Yes, dammit, I will say that. This was fan writing of the kind I grew up on and I hope it presages Ella's return to active fanning. Trouble is I'm no good at detailed comments, even when I have a fanzine in front of me, so the letter is more or less forced to end there, unless I can make a general comment that "S" is one of the things I like most about fandom. I hope you'll keep on with it forever. I'm enjoying living in this part of England, by the way, even if it is too far from London for me to go to the Globe. One of the great things about the area is the wonderful place-names, which could be straight out of Tolkien. There's a range of hills nearby called the Crinkle Craggs! And Ulverston has a street called Puddle Hodge! Rolling names like that off one's tongue is Hobbit-forming-- I could branch out as a fantasy writer on the strength of them. To this end, in an effort to soak up as much local colour as possible, I have embarked on a serious study of all the country taverns in

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the vicinity. It may turn out to be a race between inspiration and cirrhosis, but that's the sort of risk us dedicated writers accept with a smile, and some froth, on our lips." ***Ah well..if I was feeling a mite discouraged..a fine letter like this soon cheers me up!***

George Locke
27 Beechcroft Road
Upper Tooting
London, SW17



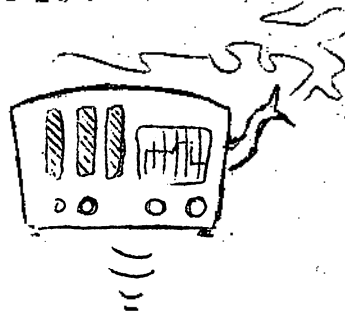
"Please do not be too shocked by this letter; it does hold bad news, but I think we'll all get over it eventually. You see, I am at last, after several years of conscience-stricken misery, going to write you a letter of comment! On the latest Scottish-she, that is. I suppose that old adage that absence makes the heart grow fonder is so very true. Certainly, Jim Linwood's dose of nostalgia worked on me. I certainly remember the agonies I suffered when I missed an episode of Dick Barton through some mysterious reason - it was almost the ultimate deterrent for the boyish me; a veto on Barton for a week was much more effective than the

traditional disciplines. On the other hand, I don't really remember The Man In Black - it could be that my parents deliberately made sure I was never exposed to this one in the first place. Or maybe it didn't just switch me on. Though I liked horror and terror winging its way over the air. I most remember getting frightened when the BBC broadcast THE HOPKINS MANUSCRIPT. At the end of part one, when the protagonist confirms in tones of subdued horror that the moon was approaching Earth, I remember making a beeline to the window, to look at the real thing. I forget now what I saw, but I couldn't sleep that night, and if I bothered to check back on the records it wouldn't surprise me if I found that the broadcast coincided with a particularly obese harvest moon, large and swollen on the horizon. But I think Jim is being a little unfair on the television. I think the idiot box has taken over the traditions of the radio heroes quite well indeed; it's just that you have to pick your way through the sludge more meticulously to sort out the wheat from the chaff. What about the Quatermass serials, for instance. I came in late on TV and only caught the third, Q AND THE PIT, but the first two were on everybody's lips at the time. And I agree about THE STONE TAPE, though I missed THE CHOPPER. And how about STAR TREK? It's a mistake to criticise that programme as though it was subject to the same standards as your best modern written SF. It succeeds very well for its media, by and large, and sometimes the episodes are very good. The charisma is there too, to some extent. Certainly Mr Spock is the most successful feature and most unusual one; certainly you could argue that the series would be a gimmicky non-entity without him, but then, in any series it seems that there must be one central character and all the rest serve adequately as the stereotyped side-kicks, like Barton's Jock and Snowy, and so on. Only, I don't think the producers ever really appreciated how important Mr Spock was, and the most successful stories in my opinion aren't those with the gorgeous technical effects (they all vanish on our poor black-and-white screens, anyway) but those which make some attempt to explore the interrelationships between Spock and Kirk, McCoy and the rest. I think there'll be another Jim Linwood writing for Scottishe number 150 nostalgificating on the TV of our times. STAR TREK will be there. Daniel Pike certainly won't be - not because my opinion of that series was low; quite the reverse - he was by far the most rivetting and interesting ~~English~~ British private eye of the contemporary screen; the trouble is, he didn't last long enough to get firmly stuck in the mind. He was a nova of brilliance who vanished after a few weeks. TV doesn't

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actually lack the long-term serials that the radio had. CORONATION STREET and CROSSROADS seem to be permanent fixtures. But they bore the pants off us kids, just as THE ARCHERS did Jim. If TV put on a good Dick Barton-type serial, our future Jim would have a bit more to write about." ***I didn't actually faint on receiving this, but I did feel a little dazed! I can remember a radio play which gave me nightmares..all about a boy being afraid of fire and being caught in one. I could hardly bear to listen to the end, in fact left the room once (which caused the adults to laugh) but pulled back by the fear of not knowing what happened.***

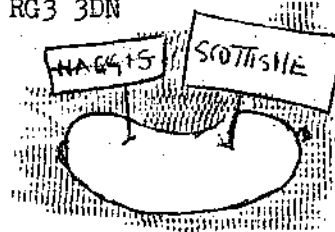
Archie Mercer
21 Trenethick Parc
Helston, Cornwall
TR13 8LH



"Re "The Great British Radio Heroes" - though I'm an old steam-wirelessman myself, I used to listen mainly for the music and contrived to miss most of the series Jim writes about. In fact, the only one that I heard to any extent of those he deals with was Dick Barton, and that only because I was a captive audience at the time. It clashed with my evening meal, you see! I didn't reckon to take much notice, though. I still have a 78 of "The Devil's Galop" nevertheless. One brief series that Jim overlooks that I did try to follow through was one that filled the Barton slot while Dick was taking a brief rest. Called (I think) "Adventure Unlimited" it featured a hero called Jackson with a sidekick called (I again think) Sam who was from

the North of England. The set-up was similar to Dick Barton, except that the adventuring took place in exotic tropical locations rather than in and around the British Isles. I also have a soft spot for Philip Odell. I once read a novelised version of one of his serials and was delighted to see that he lived in the very spot - New Square, Lincoln's Inn - where I would have chosen to live had I been compelled to live in central London...I see there's a paperback on the stands - a doctor/nurse romance apparently - called "Nurse In Print". That could well be a sub-title to Scottishe. I see there's also a magazine "for adults only" around called Slant...."

Chris Fowler
72 Kenilworth Ave.
Southcote, Reading
RG3 3DN



"..Scottishe - I'm never sure how to pronounce that, whether with an exaggerated Scots accent, or not..I am not old enough to remember Dick Barton, but certainly can remember being allowed to stay up late as a special treat to hear JOURNEY INTO SPACE. I'm a little worried by all this nostalgia for the fifties, though - it was, after all the era of McCarthy and the cold war, Suez etc. I've just been reading some books by Stan Barstow - JOBY and THE DESPERADOES among others, and they make it pretty clear that life - at least for the people in Yorkshire - was far from being a bed of roses, what

with poverty, poor living conditions and surviving sexual hang-ups.***But that is just the time when people do want taken out of themselves into some fantastic adventure..besides Jim is really being nostalgic for his youth!***

Letters 4

Mary Legg
20 Woodstock Close
Oxford, OX2 8DB



"Now I do like a bit of nostalgia, and Jim's article was a fine piece of it. I didn't catch Dick Barton.. I listened to the re-run last year. We of the post Bond and Flint generation perhaps don't take his adventures seriously, but they are great fun; I especially liked the inventivebess of the dilemmas into which the scriptwriters got him. My favourite was the time they were on a table surrounded by starving rats and I believe there was also the matter of a few trigger-happy guards. Still, they never did say "With one bound he was free", much to my disappointment. The Man in Black..we used to listen to that and it terrified us. I wasn't afraid of the dark but this series made me -well-a bit apprehensive. One thing puzzles me. There used to be a similar deliciously terrifying series on a Saturday night, which I assumed till now was the Dyall one, but evidently not, since the run-in mentions Tuesdays. Was there something similar on Sat nights? I remember I got fed up with groping back to bed after I'd put the light out. So I contrived a cunning system with string and wool, whereby a loop attached to the lightswitch was on the end of a long piece of string, which went along the top of the door, over the wardrobe top, and down the side of the bunk. Comes the next Saturday night I confidently pull the piece of string-and it breaks! So I had to get up again to put the light off, which taught me to put not thy faith in bits of string!***

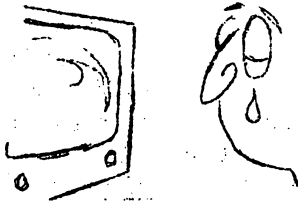
Jhim Linwood
125 Twickenham Rd.
Isleworth, Middsx.



"As a sometime fanzine reviewer I was interested in Buck Coulson's comments on the lack of worthwhile reviewing these days. From my own experience the explanation is possibly that by the time most of them are pubbed they are hopelessly out of date. Sometime ago I took Pete Weston to task for printing reviews of two year old books; the review appeared 6 months later after another SPEC has seen print. In fact of all the zines I reviewed last subsequent ishs have appeared. I often feel foolish when after slamming a poor ish and my review comes out after one or two better ishs have appeared. There is also a shizoid attitude to fmz about in fandom these days, fans will verbalise at great length how cruddy a zine is and say the opposite in print. Greg Fickersgill's reviewing has got quite a bad reputation, but he is only putting in print what a large majority of fans are saying behind the editors' backs..and in pretty much the same language.. Odd.. I wrote my radio heroes piece mostly from memory since then I've seen a TV programme on the Britsih Hero, an article on Dan Dare in Starling, and of course the publication of the ^Dan Dare annual. There seems to be a spontaneous interest in the subject. I was halfway through the Dan ^DDare Annual which reprints strips which got me into SF and Fandom when I turned to John Brosnan's Scab for a light break..somehow I just couldn't equate the two. Gosh, I forgot to mention the Therons, the brown skinned goodies on ^Venus southern hemisphere separated from their enemies, the Treens, by the eqatorial flame-belt."

Letters 5

Harry Warner
423 Summit Ave.
Hagerstown.
Maryland, 21740



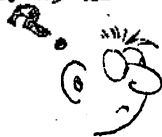
"Jim Linwood came close to making me nostalgic for stuff I couldn't possibly have experienced when it was current. I assume the BBC still has recordings of many things Jim mentions somewhere in its vaults. I've heard about fantastic musical treasures that are hoarded there. Your radio people had the knack of doing excellent recording before tape simplified the task. Of course the television programs of today which Jim clucks his tongue at with such disdain will become the subject of fine nostalgia a quarter-century from now. I don't share his impression of THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. which always struck me as superior to most action stories because of the breathless pace at which the plot progressed and the delicate balance between parody and straight drama attained for most episodes. I shudder to think what Jim would think if he saw what American television has done to Diana Rigg."***Shudder away--we are seeing it--with a stunned kind of awe!***

Mike Glicksohn
141 High Park Ave.
Toronto, Ont. M6P 2S3
Canada.



"Many thanks for printing Jim Linwood's nostalgic article on great British radio heroes. It brought back many fond memories and even unearthed one or two that had been buried so long I'd forgotten all about them...As usual, I'll disagree with Buck Coulson. In the first place, I don't see much of a lack in the number of fanzine review columns around. If anything, they're on the increase. But they are mostly short capsule summaries rather than actual reviews and that I'd put down to the fact that it's very hard to write good criticisms of fanzines. You need wide knowledge of the fanzine field, a great interest in fanzines themselves and considerable writing skill. On that I'd agree with Buck, that there aren't as many people around now who seem to care about fanzines themselves....In two months I have read four, count 'em, four books. And I have not published a fanzine either. You make me feel tired, Ethel Lindsay. Slow down and let the rest of us catch up, please?***Make me feel guilty with that last remark as I am way, way behind schedule!***

John Brunner
53 Nassington Road
London, NW3 2TY



"Thanks for the latest Scottishe...and felicitations to Jhim Linwood. Seldom have I seen a finer instance of "New Wave" type matching of style and content than in the following copied as it stood:

"The plots seem to have been written by a faulty computer, which is surprising as their author was Francis Durbridge,"

In other words it was a faulty author. "

Empirical ORDER

At Ompacon 73 I had, for the price of a single room without bath, (the hotel goofed and it worked to my advantage) a double room with bath and TV and a gadget that one could put one's trousers in to be pressed. I was able to reach new heights of self indulgence by lying in my bath with the bathroom door open watching TV whilst my trousers were creasing automatically. I met people I hadn't seen for a year and I made some new fannish friends. I got happily lushed out of my mind on the Saturday night and stayed up till 5am on Monday morning drinking and talking in the bar in fine fannish company. Could one ask for more from a convention? Well I think the answer to that is "Yes". One could and one should.

One could ask for a programme that is interesting, uncrowded, runs on time and is related to the waking, sleeping and eating hours of the conventioners. OMPACON'S programme was a mess: Too much indifferent material, badly scheduled with over-running and delays in starting and changes made without anyone being informed. And it wasn't just a case of items that looked OK on paper not working out very well in practice; a lot of the programme looked bad on paper and turned out as bad as it looked.

I'm going to work through the programme and pick on things that I think were wrong and, hopefully, say why they should have been dropped or altered. At the end of all this I'll try and tie it together with a few suggestions for future con committees. Times I give for these items are from the programme not the actual starting times. Friday, 2.30pm "The Influence of Other Stars" John Brunner, Sam Delaney and Anne McCaffrey discuss non-SF in an SF context. I know I heard it but what it was about.... 3.30pm "Fandom at Random". Listed as being fandom's representatives talking about fandom changing their lives was mostly a lot of nothing. At 5pm was scheduled "Signposts for the Future" Ken Bulmer chairing a panel of newer writers in a rather confused forum with none of the panel quite sure what they were supposed to be discussing.

10pm Friday night "Brum Group Punch Up" and I never did figure out if this one were going on or not. It hardly rated as a programme idea when it consisted mostly of everybody standing around in the Gloucester room drinking booze they'd bought themselves and waiting for something to happen. So much for "The Group's meeting moves to Bristol and becomes a party for all."

On Saturday scheduled for 10am was "If I had to do it all over again" which was another of many deadly fan panels - international this time - which didn't get anywhere. At 2pm was scheduled "It conquered the world - or did it?" This was an example of a good idea being screwed up and thrown away. The idea was to follow an alien invader movie - in this case IT CONQUERED THE WORLD, an ancient Corman flick - with a talk by biologist Jack Cohen on how

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to build a real alien. The link between the two was pretty tenuous and the cardboard and sacking alien in the film was so silly as to leave Jack with nothing to say about it, even in the nature of a put-down. There were three major errors here: Jack hadn't seen the movie, it had a dull monster and it was a rotten movie. While it might be pretty difficult to find SF movies that are heavy enough to provide any sort of argument for a biologist there are lots of good SF/Fantasy movies whose themes could provide the basis of a speculative talk. There are all the Dracula films and their variations; I'd like to hear someone give a talk on the possibility of a fully practical vampire. There's DONOVAN'S BRAIN which could lead into a talk on the brain/mind relationship and the possibility of sustaining thought in a brain separated from the body. There are the Frankenstein films and the possibility of creating life in a completely new fabricated body. Jack Cohen has become a regular speaker at cons. I don't think he'd resent having subjects suggested to him for his part of the programme.

There was a panel chaired by Philip Strick called CHRONO-LOGIC "A discussion of the consequences of Time Travel" which could be honestly described as inconclusive. It was scheduled to finish at 5.45pm for the dinner break but it over-ran. I think it started late. Next came one of the most fughheaded pieces of programme scheduling I've ever encountered. After dinner, at 7.45pm the Guest of Honour's speech titled THE DELANEY INTERSECTION to be followed immediately by, at 8.45pm BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, the Costume parade. This meant that if you were going to wear a costume you had the choice of missing Chip Delaney's speech or going without dinner and getting ready and sitting through the speech in your costume. It also meant that the committee obviously expected to be able to wave a magic wand and re-arrange the room in no measurable lapse of time. In reality what happened was that the start of the Costume parade was delayed to allow people time to change and the room to be re-arranged but to have programmed that way was hyper-ridiculous.

At 10.30am Sunday was scheduled Pete Weston and his fannish dilemma - "A Difficult Decision". I can't remember what this was, but I think it was something on the order of whether or not to use envelopes or mailing wrappers for SPECULATION. In the afternoon THAT LOVEABLE ALIEN, James White talked for about an hour in that quiet, gently amusing way of his about nothing in particular. Then a motley collection of fans was coaxed up onto the stage to take part in a quiz called H.G.WELLES MUSTACHE. I went off to my room for a little lie down.

If any conclusion can be formed from the discussion of a panel of authors on the subject of spare time writing and titled PART TIME POVERTY it must be that if someone is going to write he will do so and the problems involved in finding the time to write will be solved according to the temperament of the individual and there is very little that can be cited in the way of universal method for overcoming the problems. But several thousand cheers here for Brian Aldiss who, from the floor and in his own words, said, "If you're going to write give up your job and write and your wife, children and bank manager will just have to take their chances along with you" There were one or two "responsible" writers who denounced this point of view.

What should have been the high point of the Con, a talk by W.Grey Walter on "The Convolutions of the Brain" scheduled to commence at 7.45pm on Sunday had to be postponed until 8pm because he had got his dates mixed up and thought it was the next weekend. The banquet was to follow his talk and so it was suggested that we all run away and get changed for dinner in

the interim and then go straight to the banquet from his talk. Not many people attended which was a shame because although it wasn't the talk he'd been scheduled to give it was well worth hearing. Although we'd been told by the committee that the banquet start would be put back to give him some extra time after 30 mins some member of the committee jumped up on the stage to stop him and thank him with an embarrassing little speech about how even though hardly anyone was there to hear him he was sure that those who had showed up enjoyed it immensely even if they didn't understand it.

On Monday morning an ancient, secondrate British thriller titled TIME SLIP was shown. This was followed by a University of Kansas film of a working lunch with John W. Campbell during which he worked over a story-idea being presented to him by Harry Harrison and Gordon R. Dickson. John Brunner followed commenting on some of the things in the film and setting out worthwhile points and information for SF writing and plotting. Because we're used to seeing him around British fandom may have lost sight of what an asset it has in John Brunner. Here is a major SF writer involved in all manifestations of SF including fandom who can be relied on at conventions to present a programme item that will be well thought out, organised and interesting.

John enjoys conventions and drinking and talking and meeting other fans and writers in the way we all do and I'm sure he likes presenting a part of the programme too but all the same he puts a hell of a lot more into Fandom than most of us, (this writer most definitely included) and he deserves better than to be handed the fag-end of the Con. Now it may be that the Ompacpn committee were paying him an oblique compliment by implying that only he had the necessary weight to bring the Con to a fitting close. If this is so then I'll just shake my head in sorrow and perplexity. There were several half-baked and boring fannish items that cluttered up the early part of the programme which could have been dumped in favour of John's talk. It was about writing and since most fans have, to some degree, writing ambitions it deserved a bigger and more alert audience than the interested but sleep deprived and slightly hung-over two or three dozen of us who stayed for it.

Some months before the Con I buttonholed Fred Heddings about films and suggested he try and get A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH (STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN in the US) and THE THIEF OF BAGDAD - the Alexandra Korda version - for the Con. They are two of the best fantasy films ever made. They both have real quality and they'd probably be unfamiliar to a lot of the people attending. Fred's answer to this was that as it was an SF con they were going to keep it to SF movies. I'll argue this out a bit later but the inescapable fact is that although there are a large number of good fantasy films there aren't very many really good SF films and those that are good are more than over-exposed. THINGS TO COME, FORBIDDEN PLANET etc. So, if one wants to follow this rigid line one has the choice of either bad SF or over-familiar SF. At Bristol they plumped for bad SF. DR STRANGELOVE is a good, though only marginally SF movie, but the other two films shown were the aforementioned Corman horror and the appalling TIME SLIP. VOYAGE TO THE END OF THE UNIVERSE was listed but not screened.

From film to film sound is but a short step in this chronicle of error. I don't know if the pair of matched antiques that were used at Bristol for projection were the hotel's or were hired but the sound quality was diabolical. The sound was barely adequate on DR STRANGELOVE which was a commercial print of a film recorded in a sound studio under ideal conditions. It was utterly inadequate on the John W. Campbell film which had a sound track

recorded on location under less than ideal conditions. From film sound to PA sound. This was average for a Con-adequate, no more. One of the three mikes used kept failing which meant insufficient cover if there was more than one speaker on the platform. After a day of this Jack Cohen opened up the plug of the faulty mike and uncovered a rats nest of loose and bare wires. He put it right and the mike worked fine for the rest of the Con but it wasn't his job to do this and it should have been checked before the Con started.

OK, having moaned on and on about this let's see if I can get a bit constructive and maybe come up with a suggestion or two or, as Big Brother might yet put it, "Comrades, what lesson can we learn from all this?"

Con Committee should re-examine what has become the standard Convention model. Take another look at the things which have become standard Convention fare. For instance, do we need a banquet? OK it's popular item but it seems to be getting rather long. Could there be an entertainment with it instead of a lot of speeches? If they get a couple of decent strippers I might even decide to give up being a banquet drop out. And if we are to keep the banquet must it be Sunday night? And before the committee asks itself "Who can we get to emcee the Costume parade?" how about asking itself do we want a parade? It's a popular item for spectators but each year there are fewer people in costume. How to encourage more people to come in costume? Maybe combine it with a party with free booze for the costumed-something that will keep people in costume for the evening and not dashing off to change after the parade.

And films? How many, if any? What part are they to play? A feature part or just something to fill some time with and programmed just for entertainment value. If films are to be used the important thing surely should be to go for quality. Films cost a lot of money to rent so why waste it on junk? The idea that those terrible old low budget Hollywood and Japanese SF movies of the fifties are so bad that they're entertaining is just another of those hard to kill fantasies put about by people who haven't seen any of this stuff since they were indiscriminating kids. The bad ones are just that - bad-and hard to sit through. A 16 min extract from something like PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE can be funny but the whole film's a boring drag and not worth renting just to show 10 mins. One exception to this which I'd recommend for future cons in Rothman's hilarious VELVET VAMPIRE which almost ranks with BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS. If any argument is needed for the inclusion of fantasy films at SF cons - and it hadn't been up until Bristol -one could argue that almost all fans are interested in fantasy to some degree and a few hours of fantasy films at a con is probably about the right proportion of fantasy to SF interest.

Programme items should be started on time and shouldn't be allowed to over run. Sure, I know, this is fandom and not an assembly line in Detroit but I believe that almost all delays in conventions are avoidable. Hanging back from starting after lunch because there aren't enough people in the hall yet(which is probably due to the morning programme being allowed to over run and cut into the lunch hour)isn't good enough and one can't expect the speakers to show up on time if its obvious that the committee aren't making any effort to keep things going. Short films, judiciously used can be a way of getting people into the hall ready for when a guest speaker starts his talk. Sure its a drag if people come in when a movie is started but much less so than when they come in while somebody's talking. For the day to day running of the con perhaps some sort of module system could be worked out with a single committee man responsible for

just one item per day. Beforehand his arrangements and plans should be checked through by the committee as a whole in case he's overlooked anything. Being responsible for an item would mean checking out the people involved and keeping them informed. I don't think any speaker is going to get indignant if a committee man checks with him every couple of hours to make sure he knows when he'll be needed. Committees should get together each day before the programme starts and run through the day's programme and make sure they all know what's happening. If programme changes are necessary, members should be advised; by announcement and notice boards, blackboards perhaps, in the bar, the lounges and the hall.

Something should be done about the auctions. Certainly the cons need the bread they bring in but they have a way of over-running and disrupting the programme. People not interested in bidding leave the hall and once gone are hard to bring back on time. Maybe the more important stuff could be catalogued in advance with advance bids being taken and the other stuff, the paperbacks and so on, sold more quickly - not more than fifteen seconds on any book after the bidding is stuck and two auctioneers working from either side of the stage with one talking while the money is collected for the other's last sale.

It's always said that the committee never gets the chance to enjoy the programme. There could be at least two exceptions to this: the guy who looks after the movie projection and the one who looks after the sound. They should have no job but these during the con and if they've done their work properly, and nearly all the real work of these jobs should be done before the con, they should be able to switch their stuff on and sit back and enjoy things with the minimum amount of attention and only a little setting up and packing away before and after items.

Let's take film projection first. A subject on which I have strong feelings! The first thing the person responsible should do is see the room where the films are to be shown. He should measure it, find out where the power points are, how easily it can be blacked out, where the projectors will be placed so he'll know how much cable he'll need to lead to the speakers and where it can be laid so its out of the way of the crowds. He should find out where the screen can be hung so that it can be used and then quickly and safely moved out of the way. If he's lucky there'll be a place where the projectors can be left standing. If not he'll want a couple of wheeled trolleys for them so they can be wheeled out quickly. He should have a lockable cupboard near the projector where film and spares can be stored and a tall stool to sit on. When he's worked out all this stuff then he can concentrate on getting the right projectors and the right size screen. He's got to be sure that the projector's lenses give the right sized picture for the throw he's using and if anomorphics are needed that a matched pair is provided. The projectors should be checked before delivery is taken of them to be sure that the optics are correct, the picture steady, and the sound adequate both in power and clarity. He should make sure he has all the spares which are normally supplied with a projector; brushes, belts, where needed, and exciter and projection lamps that are of the correct size and power ratings for the machines. And these the spares should be tested too. If after taking all these precautions something major happens then that is just plain bad luck which we take our chances with but incidents like that are rare. Breakdowns usually occur because of something quite minor that can be put right immediately-a fuse blowing or lamp packing

up or guard against that which should be avoided. The way being tripped over and pulling out of the machine. Having a friend the projectionist can not to to switch out lights for him is just one of the little things that can help the programme along. If the committee talk to each other and keep to their programmes then the projectionist should be able to just go ahead and do his thing on time without waiting around to first someone to ask "if it's alright to start yet?" He can keep things on schedule.

What applies to the projectionist about knowing the hall, etc. applies equally to the guy looking after the sound system. Again most of his real work should be over by the time the Con begins. Again, where possible, what he needs should be left set up or at least locked away near to where it's being used. Now here I'd like to get in a long hard heavy plug for the use of lapel mikes or microphones worn on a lanyard around the neck so that a speaker can sit back relaxed and his voice over the PA system will stay at the same level. It's a way, too, of avoiding pauses while mikes which may be set alright for some voices but not others are passed from hand to hand. Let's make it easy for conversation to happen on the platform.

If I seem to have gone on at unnessessary length and in too much detail about projection and amplification its because each year one sees the same mistakes being made, the same lack of thought and preparation. For both projection and sound systems one rule is paramount; don't take the word of the company you're hiring from that it's just what is needed, that the spares will all be there when it's collected, that everything's working perfectly, or even more potentially disastrous, that, "it will be OK by the time you collect it." Make sure it is all there and all functioning correctly several days before you take it away.

A convention committee should not allow any other group to disrupt its programme and should be pretty damned wary of offers to put on programme items by other fan groups no matter how well meant they are. At OMPACON the only item I can think to which this applies was the already mentioned "Brum Group Punch Up" which was a real non-event but which, since it came at the end of the day, didn't disrupt the programme. I'm thinking more here of a couple of earlier Cons where fans have put on slide or movie shows which have been ill-thought out, insufficiently prepared, slow in getting organized and then have dragged on too long. Staging an item that involves bringing in machinery or equipment that the committee have not checked out out is something to be treated with caution.

Let's have a programme that is arranged to take into account and take advantage of the physical realities of con going. The average redblooded fan arrives at the con on Friday, usually more or less sober, drinks some on Friday, goes to bed relatively early Friday, drinks and dines more fully Saturday and stays up later Saturday night/Sunday morning and maybe stays up all night Sunday night/Monday morning in talk and serious merry-making. So lets have the best and most interesting items of the programme put on on the first two days of the Con when people are still fresh. Let's have on these two days, the guest of honour's speech, any speakers from outside the immediate SF field, the best movies and any items which look like being stimulating rather than, and I'm not putting down these qualities, just entertaining or amusing. Sunday's programme shouldn't be too heavy. At Chester in '72 the film triumph of the programme was to have been THE SAROGOSSA MANUSCRIPT. Rightly so too as it's a brilliant

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film but it was 'kent as a big wind up for Sunday night and was almost totally wasted as most of the fans in the room went falling asleep due to a combination of excess of booze, lateness of hour-after-midnight-the warmth of the room and lack of sleep. Let's put the heaviest items up front so that we can appreciate them while we're still fresh and we can give the people presenting them the attention they deserve.

At what time on Good Friday a Con starts is a matter for the committee to decide based on when it is most likely that the bulk of the attending fans can reach the city using public transport. But let's have it start on time. Everybody likes morning and afternoon tea and coffee breaks but let's have them organised so the programme isn't held up. Meal breaks should not be cut into. Let's have an hour and a half for lunch and two and a half hours for dinner. Not a lot, since dinner break means getting dressed, having a drink before, then a leisurely meal.

It has been argued that a full programme is needed because there will be new fans who won't know anybody, and need a lot of programme to keep them occupied. Well, rather than quantity- a lot of which will probably be in-group stuff which this new fan won't get-let's give a shorter quality programme...they will have something in common to talk about. Alternatively if Cons are to be almost entirely social occasions then let's hire a hotel in Spain and charter a plane to take us there and have an Easter of sunshine, good food, and cheap booze. It probably wouldn't cost any more than usual.

With the exception of a short organized plug for TAFF and time for such important things as bidding for future con sites let's drop all the fannish stuff in favour of heavier items. Here I'm getting on to a favourite thing of mine which is that at a convention run by and for fans the fannish things will take care of themselves-they needn't be a part of the programme. Let's start by dumping panel discussions about fanzine production; you never get a room full of people who have read the same fazine. Fandom's great to be but it is so varied as to seldom make a good topic for a talk or panel.

I am anti-panels generally for both pros and fans (and for the BBC too if they are reading this). The result of a panel discussion is not usually enlightenment brought about by bringing several points of view to a subject but rather a confusing or diminishing of it. A panel for information such as a panel of publishers talking about what they are buying can be useful but panels of discussion usually consist of guys being dragged up to discuss something without knowing in advance what it will be, and, once there, not getting enough time to enlarge their arguments. It is time we realised this.

An individual speaker is more likely to be organised and interesting. Aldis, Blish and Brunner, for instance, are guys with things to say. Let's get them talking solo on the things that concern them in the now, past and future without the (possibly unconsciously implied) stricture that it be convention material. It will interest some fans. Some of the best convention materials has been presented by academics who read and like SF but aren't actively involved in it. More of these should be used where possible.

There is no guaranteeing the success, in advance, of a programme item; but at Ompacon '73 so many of the items that turned out un-inspiring looked that way on the programme. Things which should have been noticed at the planning stage weren't and the organization just fell to pieces. It's very difficult to criticize in situations like this and we try to avoid doing so because it seems somehow like hitting below the belt. After all, the committee are often one's friends and they spend a lot of time on the convention

contd after The Launch 3

THE LAUNCH

Sam Long



'It was a clear, warm April morning, and the sun was very bright as he walked from the blockhouse toward his rocket.....' The beginning of some space-opera, perhaps? Hardly. It's something much more mundane, a phrase that came half-formed into my mind as I went for a closer look at the rocket I was to launch. The space-opera context came to mind as I flipped the switch (it is a switch, by the way, not a button) that actually fired the rocket, for I realized that I must be one of the very few men, perhaps the only one, who has ever launched a rocket from The Cape. I have the advantage of working as a US Air Force weather forecaster on The Cape itself; and the rocket I launched was, appropriately, a meteorological rocket.

Satellites and moon missions have been launched from The Cape, but the most active rocket firers are neither NASA nor the Air Force, but a small group of men from PanAm. Pan American, the airline, runs The Cape and the Eastern Test Range for the Air Force, and one of their duties is the gathering of weather data, to which end they set up a small station ('Cape Weather') for the sole purpose of making surface, balloon, and rocket observations of the atmosphere. Rocket-sound observations are made at least three times a week, and since 1961 PanAm weather observer-rocketeers have launched some 5000 met-rockets in the Eastern Test Range, more than 3000 from The Cape alone.

The metorocket launch pad is located at the very tip of The Cape, just a few hundred yards from the ocean. The launch area is unprepossessing, being merely a clearing in the palmetto scrub with a small concrete-blockhouse at one end and a set of launchers on a concrete slab at the other. The launcher on the right is covered in canvas and looks for all the world like a 3-inch naval gun; it was in fact used to launch the now-obsolete Arcas metrocket. The other two launchers are similar; it is the middle one that is in use. They look wicked, like gigantic ray-guns. The 'barrels' are frameworks of steel bars and rings twisted through 120 degrees in their 12-foot length,

The Launch.2

whereby the rocket receives a stabilizing spin as it leaves the launcher.

As I drove up to the pad, handlers are mating the two stages of the rocket on a table next to the launcher: the big booster to the sharp, narrow dart. The assembled rocket is just under 12 feet long, sleek and pointy; it looks like a rocket ought to look. The handlers put the rocket into the launcher from the breech, like men loading a cannon. Wires are attached, one set to keep the payloads' battery charged, the other to charge the ejection system's battery. A handler takes the plug out of the booster's nozzle and inserts the solid fuel. A PanAm man takes a red-flagged key from his pocket and shows it around. It is the arming key, and since it is not in the arming lock, the rocket is safe for continued handling. The firing circuit is tested, lest there be any stray currents that might set off the rocket prematurely. There are none. The igniter is connected with the firing circuit. The handlers trundle off in their pickup truck. We firers continue checking the rocket while one of the PanAm men announces the azimuth and elevation we're to fire at, viz, due east and 85o elevation.

These figures were arrived at from considerations of safety, which dictate that we launch out to sea away from The Cape, and more particularly from the wind speed and direction in the lower atmosphere, which we know from a balloon observation. In keeping with modern times, a computer calculates the angles for us. We set the launcher to the figures given and retire toward the blockhouse. All this has taken about half an hour, and it is all done slowly and deliberately, lest an accident happen, for, as the lettering on the sides of the handlers' truck says, the booster is EXPLOSIVE. Yet it's not dangerous if handled correctly, and the routine is both simple and well-practised.

I observe that most of the men at the pad are middle-aged at least, and two or three of the handlers have hair matching their white overalls. I reflect upon age and youth as I take my seat at the center one of the three consoles in the cramped little blockhouse. On either side of me, the PanAm rocketeers are calling their co-workers at the Cape Weather who will track the rocket and its instrument, and Range Safety and all the other offices required by the count-down checklist. I look out the window. Directly ahead is the rocket, pointing almost straight up. Above and to the right is a digital clock counting away the seconds to launch. Five minutes. All is going well, there are no hitches in the countdown. One minute. The man on my left hands me the red-flagged key, and I insert it in the arming lock and turn. Thirty seconds. I lift the cover of the arming switch and flip it. A voice over the loudspeaker: 'T-minus fifteen seconds, test---mark! Standby for terminal count. Ten, nine, ...' I lift the firing switch cover. '..two, one, zero!' I push the switch. A sharp roar and for an instant a tongue of flame. Yellow and white smoke fills the launch pad. Suddenly, faster than the eye can follow, faster than a blink, the rocket is gone.

A vague feeling of anti-climax overtakes me. There is no deep-throated roar no slow, ever-quickenning ascent like an Apollo Saturn 5. This rocket motor burns out in two seconds, by which time it is already a mile in the air. I grin and sit back. We must wait for five minutes for the all-clear, and by that time the exhaust trail has long since blown away. Out at the pad again, I notice that countless exhaust flames have almost no effect on the concrete at the base of the launcher; the flame is never in contact for more than an instant. I drive back to Cape Weather to see the results of my handiwork. The payload is on its way down and is being tracked; the shot is a success. Tomorrow, when the computer has reduced the data, I can get a copy of the results.

The Launch 3

All the big, spectacular rockets at The Cape are fired by the same computer that runs the countdown; metrockets are the last bastion of firing as it were by hand. Think I to myself, 'Curious that computers have taken over so thoroughly that even button-pushers are out of a job.' To tell the truth, the blockhouse is not the best place to watch a metrocket launch from; the narrow window constricts the view. Better is a position a half a mile down the road where you can watch the rocket streak upward on its exhaust trail twice as fast as a rifle bullet, and spouting flame to boot. You get a more spectacular view, true, but you miss the considerable pleasure of being able to say 'I've launched a rocket from The Cape.'

Metrocket launches take place three times a week at The Cape. Fen visiting the Cape area and wishing to fire one of these rockets are invited to contact me, Capt. Samuel Long, 6WWD11, Patrick AFB, Fla 32925.USA, and I will arrange it if I can.

Sam Long.

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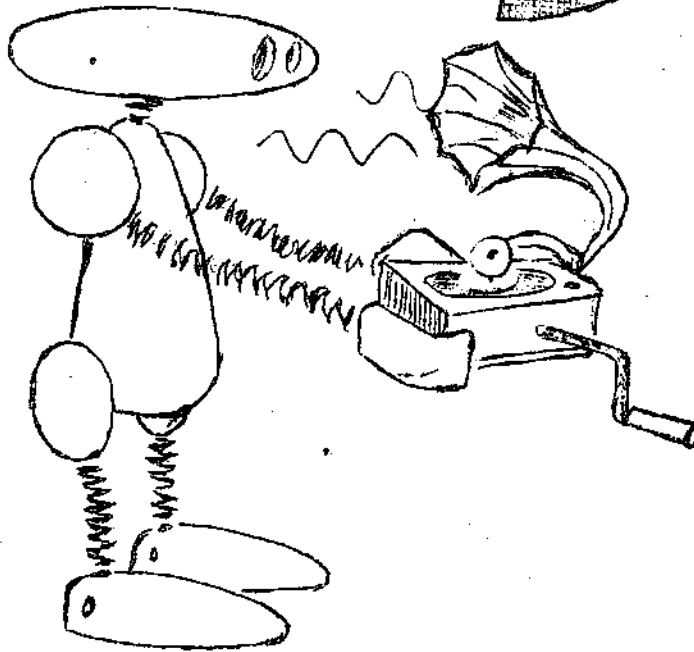
and they are nt getting paid for it. No they are not getting paid, but cons cost a lot to attend(ironically the smallest amount is the cost of the programme itself). A con bid should not be made until the group have sat down and thought things through.

Each year con committees say they want to do new things when what they mean is they want to find new ways of doing the same old things. The shape that conventions now have is pretty much the shape they've had for the last ten or fifteen years. Maybe it is the optimum shape and the sort of programme we have is the best possible programme but just to be sure, let's go back to square one in convention programming and think it all through from the beginning again as though this was the first time it had ever been done.

Mervyn Barrett.

June-Sept.1973.

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There is a book newly published about fanzines. It is called THE WORLD OF FANZINES. A SPECIAL FORM OF COMMUNICATION by Fredric Wertham, M.D. It costs \$10 and can be obtained from Box 3697 Carbondale, Illinois 62901, USA. Or from the Transatlantic Book Service, 51 Weymouth St. London WIN 3LE.

The author is a well-known psychiatrist who has studied the effect of mass communication on human behaviour. So, this is a serious study that begins with a history of fanzines; there is a fine selection of artwork and cartoons at the beginning of the book. There is a listing of fan-words and a chapter showing where the various fanzines come from and how widespread their publication throughout the world. It gets more interesting as he discusses the characteristics of fanzines and the fact that they are "very nonprofit". He is particularly good in showing the differences between fanzines and the "underground press". I also

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liked where ~~in~~ his summing up he says - "There is no doubt that fanzine writers would want the world to be a better place and would like to be part of a better social order. But they do not represent an opposition; it is rather an assertion, not a protest but a resistance." I would be very interested in seeing reviews of this book from outside the fanzine world!

As to this fanzine, it has been going through sad days. For at least six months I have been neglecting it, and I wouldn't blame you if you had thought it had died away at last. Well, I figure on about 18 years of publication now..and that's a long time. I kept to my schedule of four issues a year for a long time too. But lately that has not always been the case and last year was lamentable.

The explanation is my work. I finally got promotion and now have the grade of Nursing Officer Grade 7A. Trust me to get promoted to Matron just as they did away with the title! I had a worrying time of it last year, but things seem to be improving now as I got a school of ophthalmic nurse trainees started on Jan.1st. All the worries are to do with staff..getting them...keeping them...moving them around to cover holes left by sickness. All my best schemes can gang agley as somebody gets the flu! Even when the school appeared on Jan.1st - one of them was using crutches, she had sprained her ankle that very day. New Year's day went by in a blur as I got them all settled in.

For months now I have come off duty and flopped. So fanac gets more and more behind. At the same time I can't just say, well I'll drop it all. Habit dies too hard for that; and besides I don't really want to stop. My trouble is I can never go gafia without feeling guilty!

So, slowly, out comes another issue. My apologies to the contributors who have had to wait so long.

Merv Barrett appears here for the first time with a long article about conventions. My first reaction on reading it, was to expostulate with him. "You ought to try being on a con committee before you criticise" I said. My next thought was that since he obviously knew so much about the film side of it he ought to volunteer for the job. He pointed out that it would be necessary to be living in the town where the con was being held. Mmm..maybeso..but the next con committee ought to try and grab him, for all that.

Personally I enjoyed last year's convention. I was in the group who staged the robot revolution(that marvellous idea of Tony & Simone Walsh)at the Fancy Dress parade. I had the time of my life, hidden under tinfoil, stamping my feet, and screaming "Down With Humans!"

but not all of you!