



## Play Me Some Shipyard Blues...

### *Living In A Village*

As is by now well-established, fans live in a series of fannish villages, even though each fan may live miles away from another member of their particular village. Quite often, a village 'community' is built up around a local SF group, or around a particular fanzine (or a group of fanzines). Many fans will be a member of a number of villages – a few might be considered a member of all fannish villages, by the esteem with which all hold that fan. (A good example of that was the late great ATom.)

The village community meets in various ways: in person, at conventions and group meetings, by letter and phone, and through the pages of the village fanzines.

As a fan-editor, I live in a village which has my fanzine as its centre. (That's not egotistical, just the plain truth.) I meet fans through the pages of my fanzines, and via the letters I get in response to my publications. Occasionally I might speak to a fan on the phone, even more occasionally, I might meet one in person (hi Shep! hi Pete! hi Mike!). So my village's

boundaries are circumscribed by the readership of my fanzine.

What this means to me is that my fandom is almost entirely based on a one-to-one relationship with my readers: it isn't affected by outside factors like what goes on at a convention, or what this group or that group thinks. It means that I see each and every one of my readers (and that means you) as individuals, all capable of contributing in some way to this fanzine. Whether that contribution is in articles or artwork for me to use, in letters for me to dismember and turn into a loccol, or simply words of encouragement, I don't mind (though I do warm more towards people who are prepared to get involved in the fanzine, rather than passively consuming the product like good little capitalists). I get my kicks out of this interaction.

Now this does have some disadvantages: for a start, it imposes a high overhead in the way of correspondence to keep the 'relationship' worked at, and that's something I have trouble keeping up with at times. But it is important to me that I do keep the correspondence flowing,

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because that is the way I find out the kind of things that you, as readers, find interesting, and that you, as individuals, can contribute to the zine.

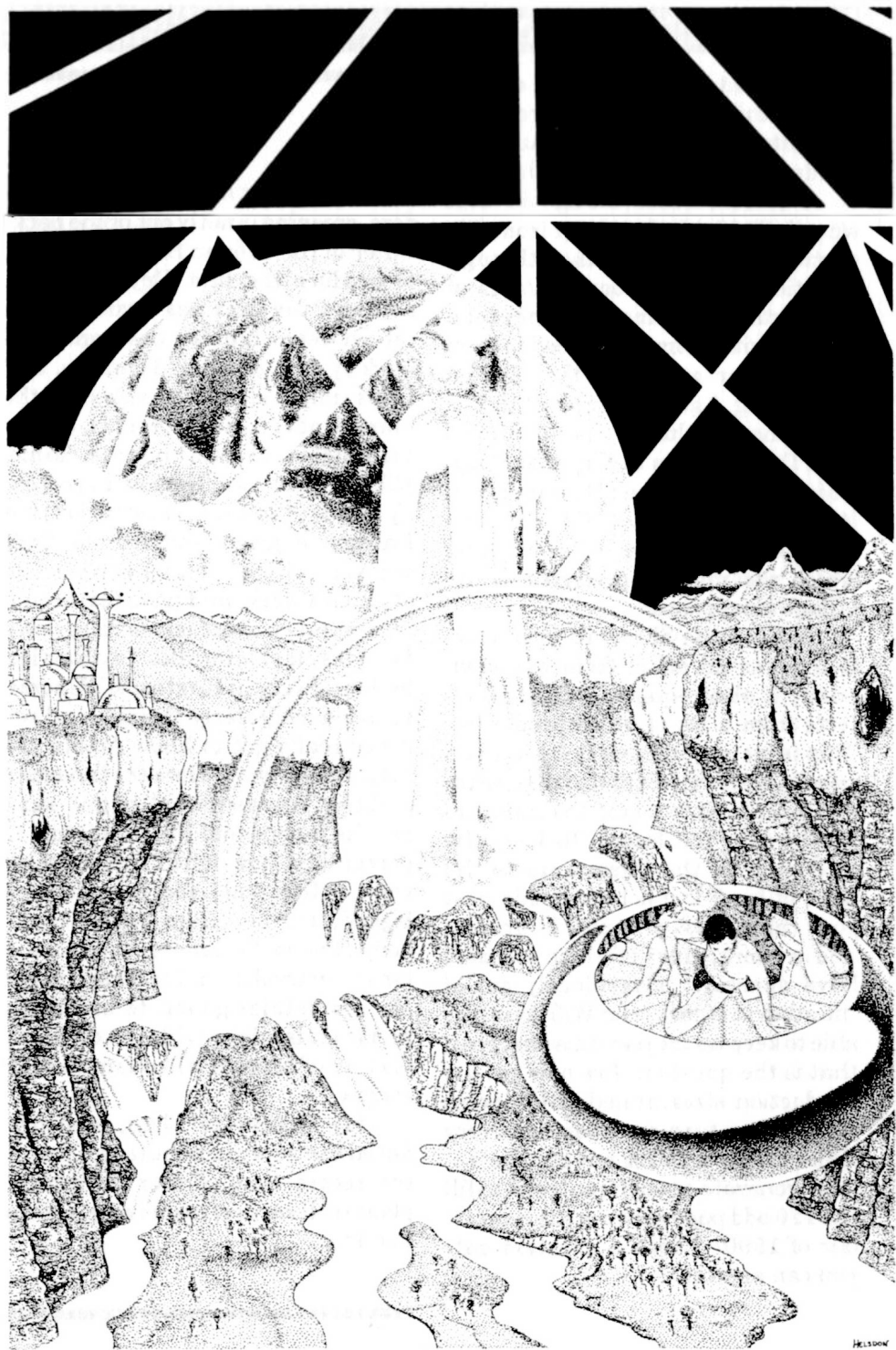
A second disadvantage is that when individuals disappear from this particular village (whether through gafiation or, sadly, from an attack of the mortalities) sometimes they take a talent with them that I need to keep a particular aspect of the fanzine flourishing. A good example of that is the Fanart Column that I started with Dave Collins in **Crystal Ship**, which foundered when Dave gafiated. It is often impossible to find someone to take their place, so something which was much appreciated by the village disappears.

To keep the Shipyard in production takes an effort from me, obviously: it also requires individual efforts from a lot of other people too. This issue contains work by a dozen people, both writers and artists, without beginning to count the numbers involved in the loccol. To keep the frequency of the fanzine up to the kind of level I've achieved this past year takes a lot of input, in articles and artwork, much of which seems to have appeared miraculously out of the ether this past year. Will you all be able to keep up the pace this next year, that is the question! I've now got the production streamlined to the point where I can turn out a fanzine every three to four months: but can the 'village' generate enough material to fill the 120 odd pages during the remainder of 1990? That's a question only you can answer.

## ATom

When I first entered fanzine fandom, creeping quietly out of the backwater of the Tolkien Society in 1977, to produce the first **Crystal Ship**, amongst the fanzines I got back in return were a number that contained work by Arthur 'ATom' Thomson, and I was immediately impressed by the humour of the subject matter, and by the simple yet subtle linework. To me, ATom's work rapidly came to personify a style of 'fannish' illustration that I always enjoyed, and still do. Over the past thirteen years I've seen a lot of ATom's work, and have featured it on a number of occasions in my own fanzines, including illos for an article by John Berry in **Rastus 3**. We corresponded irregularly, though, and so I never really got to know Arthur the man, rather than ATom the fanartist, and that is something I regret, since now he is gone and I can't tell him in person just how much I enjoyed his work. ATom was, and is, a fannish legend, and he leaves behind him a body of work for later generations of fans to marvel at and to chuckle over. My sympathies go out to his family and friends, along with the certainty that all of fandom will share in their sorrow.

(My thanks to Shep, who produced the cover in tribute to ATom in the record time of four days, from phone call request to delivery into my hands.)



**K.V. Bailey**

## **Xanadu and Yggdrasil**

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree." The dome, surmounter and summit of palaces cathedrals and mosques, is also now firmly with us as a pleasure-encloser. In fact, the whole of Coleridge's Xanadu 'architecture', sunny dome and caves of ice merging into one cavernous ambience, is capable of translation into recognisable, if less romantic, contemporary equivalents. Alph, sacred river of the Xanadu caverns, tumbles now through flumes and water-chutes. The dome's inner curvature is screen for the simulated galaxies of planetaria; or in Disney World will embrace the approaching surface of Mars. In geodesic form the dome encourages an infinite variety of purposes. Such a dome I discovered some time ago in a park in Vancouver. It almost envelops the biosphere. Maze-like paths at changing levels thread its interior, where sections are so conditioned as to create mini-climates, so that you can go from rain-forest to sub-tropic to desert in a twinkling of the feet, while birds of those ecologies flutter around your head. At its outer rim, in morphological contrast, rises a group of Henry Moore perpendicular abstracts. Their orientation, twisting upwards and skywards, is a late modernist manifesta-

tion of the tensions and dynamics of Gothic form – of the soaring arch, the pinnacle and spire, which Oswald Spengler saw as having affinity with the northern forests, and with such symbols as the World-Ash, Yggdrasil, archetypal Cosmic Tree in axial tension between heaven and earth.

Such contrasts direct the imagination back towards origins and on towards the future. There is a striking description in Suzy K. Charnas's novel **Motherlines** of the terrain of her Amazonian 'Riding Women', the outer 'Grasslands' that stretch beyond the bounds of a male-dominated dystopia. These lands appear as "a great disc of earth revolving endlessly under the great disc of sky and season." The Womens' dim, curving-roofed tents match the terrain and, as seasons change, are moved around it by the semi-nomadic Women. The tents provide a protective cavernish space shielding them from climatic extremes. Ms. Charnas models her 'Grasslands' on the wide steppes, plains and deserts of our planet, bringing elements of the ways of life of their historic hordes and tribes to enter into the pattern of 'Grasslands' existence. And it is out of such historic environmental ecologies that the architecture of what Spengler termed

## Shipyard Blues

the 'Magian' or 'Arabian' culture (and Toynbee, more or less equivalently, the 'Syriac') first arose: an architecture pre-eminently of the dome, a form which, it has been said, "excludes all tension between heaven and earth".

High-arching, high-aspiring Gothic is the grand style of the West, but the dome too has its place in European architecture. Such great domed High Renaissance churches as St Peter's in Rome and St Paul's in London owe their domes in part to a heritage originating in Magian, or Syriac, and ancient Classical (Roman) minglings. One of Wren's inspirations for St Paul's was St Peter's; and one of Michelangelo's inspirations for St Peter's was the vast dome of the Emperor Hadrian's Pantheon, which in its turn embodied an Eastern influence – in fact Spengler called it "the earliest of all Mosques". This Eastern (Syriac)'domal' form while going on to manifest itself classically in such buildings as the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem and the Great Mosque of Damascus, was to make its impress on Byzantine-Greek, Byzantine-Venetian, on Russian and, by various transmissions, on Romanesque, Gothic and Classical Western church architecture. To stand beneath a great dome is to experience something of what is meant by that phrase 'exclud(ing) all tension'. There is a hint of it in the opening chapter of Gwyneth Jones's novel *Kyros*, where her fraught and bedraggled 'heroine', Sandy Brize, comes into St. Paul's out of the "bitter city air" to be "swallowed up in the

deep, shadowy, whispering immensity" of "a vast fluted shell". It isn't quite the same feeling as that which you get in the interior of a purely Gothic cathedral, where vision and spirit soar and fall and rise again, impelled by the dynamics of column, shaft, and vault, exhilarated by their inter-relationships within the overall cruciform structure. Tensions are in a Gothic nave of the essence; and light is the medium through which the tensions are resolved. Nowhere is this more felt than at Chartres, where there appears to be a virtual transfiguration of space into light – light chromatically filtered through windows which themselves as structural components seem to defy or negate both matter and gravity.

There is one especial spot where the two experiences – of soaring arches and enclosing cupola – are convergent. The Octagon at Ely was built by Alan of Walsingham early in the 14th Century after the cathedral's central Norman tower had collapsed. It is a miraculous structure, once described as "the only Gothic dome in existence". Its width is that of the entire building; its lower octagonally-sprung oak vaulting is surmounted by an eight-sided Lantern, flooded with light from thirty-two high set windows, and arched over by an airily-soaring eight-cornered vaulted roof centred by a Christ-adorned boss. All the tensions of the Gothic are displayed, and are resolved by light. At the same time the Lantern conveys the enclosing and containing peace of a dome.

## Shipyard Blues

A modern church in which a semi-dome is surmounted by a high Lantern is the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King at Liverpool. It has been unkindly described as a cross between a power station and a circus tent – unkindly, but significantly, for in it are combined technologies of the twentieth century with a suggestion of the form of that very structure with which these speculations began – the tent. The building's curving span, greater even than that of Saint Sophia, largely shuts out, as would a tent, the outer world, while letting fall universal light through its tall Lantern windows, in a filtering of red, yellow and blue, on to the centrally placed white altar.

Having travelled a great distance from Disney World and and pleasure domes, I have now come partly back, by way of the circus tent analogy. Architecture today is nothing if not eclectic – and there is Yggdrasil again to be considered. Crowning pinnacles fretting the skylines of San Francisco and New York are as ambitiously heaven-piercing as the tallest forest giants, or as were the medieval spires of Strasbourg and Salisbury. It is, however, the dome, as a form interiorly excluding tensions, which could play the more significant role as we move through years when such therapy may be welcome. Or perhaps the two forms together will appropriately accompany our passage through them. At points in this century those two forms – tower/spire and dome – have sprung up, maybe fortuitously, yet suggestively enough, in mutual proximity: as did the Skylon and the

Dome of Discovery at the Festival of Britain. (What a shame that those two splendid structures went from the South Bank. Brussels, wisely, kept its Atomium, and Paris its Eiffel Tower – which looks across but a short distance to the Dome of Les Invalides.) An unplanned near-juxtaposition is that of the Planetarium and the Post Office Tower in London; and there is a historically interesting nineteenth century pairing in the dome of the Royal Albert Hall and the Gothic Albert Memorial. Three hundred feet above the Liverpool waterfront the tower-top Liver Bird symbolically stretches its wings, while it actually stands on a crowning dome and is flanked by a host of small cupolas.

The imagery of science fiction has always found place for both forms, investing them with its own varieties of symbolism. Mistaken interpretation of an illustration showing a spaceport field full of towering rockets (he took them for a clustering of skyscrapers) gave James Blish, it is said, the inspiration for his cosmos-voyaging, spindizzy-propelled, enclosed cities. Asimov in **The Caves Of Steel** rang the changes on both images. Although his future City (New York) is roofed over, it is composed of blank-walled towers. To live ant-like in them, and to travel the network of moving ways between them, are shown to be stressful experiences. (Emsh classically illustrated the scene on the cover of the October 1953 issue of **Galaxy**.) The Spacers, on the other hand, paradoxically

those who could face happily the open skies and whose ships ascended into them, live not in towers but in separately spaced and spacious family domes, eat natural food, contact freely the out-of-doors, and are a comparatively 'Green' culture.

Among SF cinematic images the Kubrick/Clarke obelisk stands anomalously within a lunar cavern; and at the end of **2001: A Space Odyssey** it appears as stimulus, or catalyst, effecting a peaceful transition from death chamber to encircling womb (both dome-like shapes). In fiction, film and folk-faith the dome-shaped ufo (complemented by phallic mother-ship) has often enfolded a tension-resolving interior – as it does in **Close Encounters Of The Third Kind**, where its phallic and tension-arousing complement is the Devil's Tower. In the film **Silent Running**, the hydroponic dome is the ultimate in depicting an 'Eden' closed against outer threat. A more recent example of the 'hardish' SF novel is Gregory Benford's and David Brin's **Heart Of The Comet**. There hydroponic domes rise on the surface of, and cavernous 'Edens' lie at the core of, the dynamically starward-bound 'column' of Halley. Le Grand Cavern, with its microgravity, is the central vault "where various experiments sorted themselves out and where startling new solutions appeared". The hydroponic domes are described in terms beautifully expressive of a tensionless calm: "She liked the way the silvered inner surface of the dome reflected a warped surreal vision of Carl immersed in a riot of plantlife, as if it were an ocean in which he was afloat." These domes are remote from the tensions which flow through the labyrinth of passages and the ascend-

ing and descending shafts within the Comet's hurtling body. Yet near the Comet's heart are such caverns as 'Stormfield Park' with its planted dwarf-trees and lawns, its cityscape and waterscape holograms, its actual carp-filled pool and willow-shaded glade and tea-house, all reminiscent of the "walls and towers" and "gardens bright with sinuous rills" of Xanadu. There, strolling, relaxing and playing games, the Comet's 'captives' enjoy a most peculiar luxury.

These various SF images are, however, chiefly projections of forms which are functionally familiar to us. I finish as I began by stressing the pleasure and leisure-dome aspect of the subject. It has historically existed for long enough. Sidney Smith, the witty Regency reverend, said of Prinny's marvellous folly, the Brighton Pavilion, that it would seem that St. Paul's had gone down to the sea and pupped. Looking back again to the Romans we find not only Syrian 'domal' influence, but architects and craftsmen from western Asia actually employed in constructing the domed Calidarium of that great centre of sophisticated leisure and pleasure, the Baths of Caracalla. Variations on the dome, in fiction and in fact, may, today and in the future, as sites of pleasure or of contemplation – park, stadium, planetarium, museum, concert hall or temple – inherit a similar containing and representational role to that intended by Hadrian for his Pantheon – with its statues and altars to the planetary gods, a circularly enveloping microcosmos; while the sky-aspiring tower, like a Canaveral launch reaching ever higher, may contemporarily embody the vertical and vertiginous tensions of the Gothic.



**Eric Mayer**

## **The Metaphysics of Professionalism**

What is 'professional'? Who is a 'pro'? We tend to assume that these things exist but that their definitions are debatable. When Gardner Dozois began editing **Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine** he used a rejection form telling the recipient that there is some subtle quality called professionalism which separates the truly professional story from the merely amateur effort.

Like Dozois, most of us believe in the existence of some actual quality which can be labelled 'professional'. Or at least we act as if we do. We admire the Pros who can produce this wonderful thing. Some of us strive to do the same ourselves and despair at our own lack of whatever personal qualities it takes to make the magic.

But are we mistaken? Is there really such a thing as 'professional'? Have we been asking ourselves questions that can't be answered?

A couple of years ago I performed an experiment. I attempted to sell, professionally, a dozen essays I had written for fanzines. None of the essays had appeared in a fanzine with a circulation greater than 150. Most

had seen only the blurred ditto print of 65 copies of my own zine **Groggy**. I managed to sell about half. I say 'about' because the word 'sell' turns out to be not much easier to define than 'professional'.

The fact that I managed to sell any fanzine articles at all renders meaningless Dozois' idea that amateur and professional writings are distinguishable by means of some almost mystical quality present in one and lacking in the other. 'The Joys of Staying at Home' the article I was paid for and that appeared in **Baby Talk** (circulation 1,000,000) was word for word the article I wrote for free that appeared in Brian Brown's **Sticky Quarters** (circulation 150). By what means could anyone prove that in **SQ** the article was anything but 'amateur' or that in **Baby Talk** it was anything but 'professional'? If some quality of professionalism exists how had the 'Joys of Staying at Home' suddenly acquired it? Had it crawled into the envelope somewhere in New York City?

But could it be that the article had been 'professional' all along but

## Shipyard Blues

wasn't revealed as such until I sent it to **Baby Talk**? What sort of 'quality' isn't readily apparent to all observers? Is 'professionalism' like the colour red, which most people can see but which a colour blind person needs someone to point out to him? In the matter of professionalism then are editors the only truly sighted individuals in a world of the blind?

If so, how can I explain the fate of 'The Day the Cows Got Out' which was rejected by 8 (blind?) editors before it sold to **Upstate Magazine**? How can there be a quality which is dependent for its existence upon the particular observer?

Apparently we are not talking about a quality at all but about a judgment. And not just a judgment either. Would we accept the word of a editor that a story is professional without his buying it? I once had a letter from George Scithers at **Amazing** unreservedly praising a story I'd submitted. Unfortunately, he told me, I can't buy it because we're overstocked. Scithers' opinion hardly rendered the story professional.

It seems that whether a piece of writing is professional depends on some inherent quality only to the extent that there is something in the writing that convinces someone, somewhere, to make some sort of judgment and do something about it which convinces us to call the writing professional.

What an editor usually does, to convince us of a piece's professionalism is to buy it. But even if we say that professionalism isn't a quality but is a label we attach to something as a

result of its selling, there remains the question of what constitutes a sale?

Were the articles I sold to **Festivals** just before it went out of business and which consequently never saw print, as professional as the articles which had appeared in the magazine earlier? Does a real 'sale' require that an article see print? What about 'The Artist in the Sticks' written for Dave Locke's **Time And Again** and accepted by **Weatherwise** but never paid for or used since I couldn't obtain a release from the article's real, but fictionalized protagonist? Surely a real sale requires payment.

But what kind of payment? Is the subscription I was given by **Festivals** sufficient? It was a thoroughly professional magazine. Its editor was paid, its secretaries were paid. I was able to pick it up at a Rochester newsstand. Did the absence of money render my sales nonprofessional? If professionalism depends on monetary payment is the mini comic I've collaborated on with Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles artist Mark Martin, and which has sold all of 70 copies at a dollar each, out of my basement, more professional than the articles I wrote for **Festivals**?

Is it a matter of how much is paid? If so who decides what level of payment is professional? And how could it be that a script I wrote for a comic book which sold 2,000 copies is more professional, based on the amount of payment, than an essay I did for a magazine with a circulation thousands of times greater?

Maybe it isn't enough that the

magazine pays. Maybe we should be looking at whether the magazine buying the material is itself professional. But what do we base our determination on? Circulation? In that case **Baby Talk** is more professional than **The Magazine Of Fantasy And Science Fiction**. Is there simply a circulation figure below which a magazine cannot be considered professional? What then about those respected literary magazines with circulations in the hundreds? Look at the copyright page in any collection of contemporary short stories and you will see that short story authors regularly scatter their work between **The New Yorker** and obscure journals most of us have never heard of. Are some of their efforts professional and others not? In this desktop publishing era we certainly can't base our judgment on how professional a magazine looks. Maybe we should base our judgment on distribution and disqualify magazines like **Baby Talk**, given away in department stores.

But is distribution a better criterion of professionalism than payment? And what sort of distribution scheme are we looking for anyhow? Hundreds of black and white comics are sold exclusively in comics shops and their creators and publishers are making living producing them

It would appear that not only is there no real inherent quality we can point to as 'professional' but that it is not even possible to specify criteria that in every instance make something 'professional'.

The latest Stephen King novel on the bestseller rack is most likely pro-

fessional while 'Admiral Rod of the Space Patrol' in longhand in a fifth-grader's tablet is, probably, not. But it is hard to say exactly where the nonprofessional becomes professional. Most of my work has fallen into that twilight zone in the middle which is why I've used it as an example.

We can't meaningfully say "This is (or isn't) professional". We can only say that something is professional in the sense that it meets whatever criteria of professionalism we have decided to accept for the purpose of evaluating the particular work, at the particular time, for whatever reason.

So the next time the discussion in a fanzine turns to whether a magazine is a prozine, semi-prozine or a fanzine or whether a piece of writing is of professional quality, or what it takes to write something professional, you'd be better off ignoring the gibberish and concentrating on problems more susceptible to solution – like who sawed Courtney's boat or whether Yngvi really was a louse.

MENTALLY, HE IS  
DERANGED LIKE A  
PRESCHOOLER'S  
ALPHABET...



**Martyn Taylor**

# **Whatever Gets You Through The Night...**

Hey, you up there, the obsessive.  
I'm talking to you.

Me?

Yeah. Who else is up there?

But I'm not an obsessive. I'm quite reasonable, really...

Look, you're reading this, aren't you, reading a nonprofit making publication written by amateurs and don't give me any shit about John Boy Owen's production values. If you're reading this you are an obsessive.

Hmmm. I've never looked at it like that before...

Too right you never bleedin' well LOOKED. Too busy soddin' well READING to look at anything, weren't you, you...

At this point the conversation subsided into mere personal abuse unfit for publication outside Viz and so I will draw a veil over it and pass on...

If you are reading this you are an obsessive by contemporary standards. Our contemporary standards

have anyone who reads anything for nothing more than pleasure pinned as a freak, and anyone who produces something like SB with no more profit in mind than the pleasure it gives his friends as a raving loonie. So, we're all in the club. The chances are that you are a fan and maybe even read SF. If so you are triply damned.

Getting kind of cosy in here, isn't it?

Anyway we all have obsessions, preoccupations which we take beyond the threshold of mere casual interest. Tell John about yours and I shall tell you about mine.

Well, there is the family, Cathie and the kids, but that is standard stuff, domestic bliss and harmony, nothing out of the ordinary. Then we have the reading of fiction and the pathetic belief I can create it. Were this the outside world some of you would, even now, be reaching for the telephone to call up those nice young men in the clean white coats, but here in the warm bosom of our fannish family that has me painted as merely

a mild nutter. At least I don't try to make my living at it! I am interested in politics, if not active, which, while our beloved leaderene may disapprove, is not exactly unknown, even among us apathetic types. I follow the fortunes of Newcastle United FC, Yorkshire CCC and the Chicago Bears but, once again, these are hardly sufficiently unusual to make that interest worthy of an article.

I have videotaped every single episode of **Cagney & Lacey**, right from the pilot with Loretta Swit as Cagney, through the first six episodes with the curiously eyeless Meg Foster in the role, right through to the end where the two defenders of truth, beauty and the American way ride into a sunset of cynicism, betrayal and a son who believes in Rambo.

Maybe it isn't Notre Dame made out of cigarette cards but I think it will do.

Why? Now there is a question. The show is, after all, no more than a fairly mechanical buddy cop show with a token black, token polack, token spic and token old man as well as the one more than token woman. If our two heroines do not resort to the Buntline solution quite as often as token Greek Starsky and token honky Hutch did there can be no doubting they are macho women in the aggressively masculine world of law enforcement. That token wop Lacey has problems with her family and token mick Cagney has problems with the bottle and senile delinquent father is little more than camouflage. The mixture is as before, just with enough spice of feminism and social concern to make

the viewer think they are watching something new while being reassuringly familiar.

So why do I go weak at the knees, dribble a little and stay up late to watch the repeats? I, after all, made my entry into fandom with a review of the impenetrable Tarkovsky film **Stalker** and clambered aboard **The Crystal Ship** with an analysis of Kurosawa's **Seven Samurai**. With the light from the right direction I can almost pass for an intellectual.

The answer, my friends, is sex. Mary Beth Lacey is my kind of girl. No doubt about it. Look at her. She is woman shaped rather than model shaped, kind of narrow at the shoulder and wide at the hip. Rubens would have loved her, and there was a man with taste in women (reprehensible and sexist, maybe, but taste). But that is not all. She has problems with her hair and is obviously dressed by Sears Roebuck. She still enjoys the marriage bed with a husband who to describe as unprepossessing is to pay unwarranted compliments. She is socially gauche at times but has that heart the size of a frying pan so plainly in the right place it hurts. She is loyal to her loved ones – did I say 'loyal'? Perhaps a tigress might defend her cubs more fiercely but don't ask me to put any money on the outcome. She lives in a bog standard apartment/house (depending on the series) and has no higher ambition to live until she dies, keeping her family in good health and comfort...

If you walk down any main thoroughfares anywhere in the world you will see legions of Mary Beth Laceys

## Shipyard Blues

just as you will see legions of women who, for beauty and character, knock the present and every other Miss World into the proverbial cocked hat. That, to me, is the clinching argument. She looks and behaves like someone I might know (those of you who know me think that goes rather further than 'might'; if so, it's a fair cop...).

Which is probably another reason why I find myself out of time these days. You see, my sexual fantasies tend to be about real (or apparently

real) women. Pneumatic centrefolds or painted hussies don't interest me at all, at least not to the extent of anything resembling erection. The image may be everything these days but by me Lorenz Hart had it right, there ain't nothing like a real live dame (or man, for those of another proclivity).

Just don't ask me to reconcile that view with obsession in respect of a fictional character in a TV show. I am, after all, merely a man.



**Andy Sawyer**

## **Of Poverty, Pain And Enforced Transvestism**

A man knows he's getting old when he ends up wearing his daughter's cast-offs.

Mary and Rosamund have been exchanging teeshirts and blouses for some time and on at least one occasion Mary has cast covetous glances at one of Rosamund's skirts, but I never thought it could happen to me.

No, hang on a minute. Don't get me wrong. It's not *quite* what you're thinking. Let me start at the beginning...

A recurrence of the 'frozen shoulder' I suffered from a couple of years ago came upon me suddenly, leaving me unable to move my right arm more than a few inches from the side. And all *those* jokes have already been cracked, *thank* you. Glossing over a few minor inconveniences such as excruciating pain when I tried to move my right shoulder, and the fact that my doctor had ordered me not to type for at least a fortnight, I was still

left with one fairly major problem. The weather at the time was quite chilly, and while there are ways of getting a pullover on without lifting your arms up, it's sometimes not that easy. To freeze, or to suffer: that was the question.

Rosamund came to the rescue.

The latest craze among the Second Year was wearing men's long grey cardigans. This managed to adhere to school rules about uniform and at the same time bend them in a way not quite intended by the authorities. A few months previously, Rosamund had bought such a garment at British Home Stores. It met the requisite rules of 'casual'-ness: however, quality wasn't quite up to the mark and it ended up with more holes in the back than was socially acceptable. (We are thoroughly *post-punk*.) In fact, it was just about to be thrown away.

Now I *loathe* men's grey cardigans. Slippers I can handle. Going bald I suspect I'll have to deal with.

## Shipyard Blues

Being overweight is just part of life's rich pageant. Sitting slumped in front of the TV in the evenings is considerably more fun than the average pub conversation. But how anyone who has dreamed rich and wondrous dreams can do so in a grey cardigan is beyond my ken. Did The Who appear at Woodstock in grey cardigans? Did Shakespeare write his plays wearing a grey cardigan? And what about Leonard Cohen's hymn to shabby romanticism, 'Famous Blue Raincoat': does –

"And the last time we saw you, you looked so much older/ Your famous grey cardie was torn at the shoulder." *really* have the same resonance?

Cardigans of any description on men are excrescences. Grey cardigans are an offence against the Law and the Prophets, and should be dealt with accordingly. Slobbishness is one thing. Being a slob in a grey cardigan brings on suicidal tendencies.

But needs must when a lateral movement of the shoulder reminds me of what Guy Fawkes must have gone through at his interrogation.

Reader, forgive me.

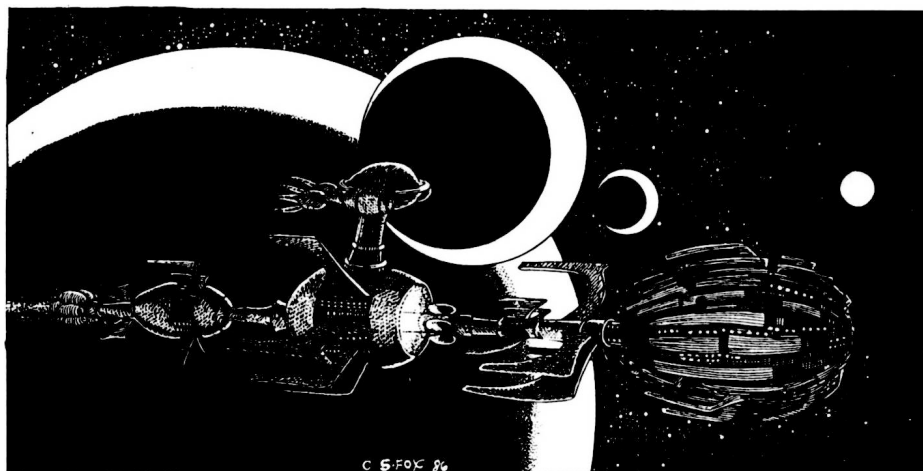
I accepted the cardigan

"Hey," said members of my family. "That looks *good*. It suits you. Why don't you buy a new one. For yourself."

When you cannot move your arm, you cannot thump people. I screamed as my attempt to turn round and stomp off in a huff jarred my shoulder. Oh well – at least I wasn't cold.

At the time of drafting this, my condition allows me enough mobility to use a pen. If you are reading this, I will have recovered to the extent of being able to use the typewriter once more.

On the other hand, I may just put my slippers on, light up a pipe, and sit in front of the telly wearing my nice grey cardigan...





**Pam Baddeley**

## **The Nuclear Red Herring**

Nuclear energy has been a fiercely contested issue ever since it first impinged on public awareness. Passionate arguments have ranged back and forth regarding safety of plants, disposal of waste, possible use of material in nuclear weapons and so on. Any seemingly benign or positive aspect has been seized upon by those anxious to calm public fears, to present nuclear power as a force for good. The latest addition to the nuclear apologists' arsenal is the environmentally-friendly one: nuclear power plants do not produce carbon dioxide and hence do not contribute to the greenhouse effect. (We'll leave aside the consumption of fossil fuels entailed in their construction.) Similarly, the finite nature of fossil fuels and the damaging impact on the environment by hundreds of coastally-sited windmills are also cited as compelling reasons to turn to nuclear energy as the only solution. Terry Jeeves' article in **SB2** uses all these arguments. And yet, nuclear power is not so much an elephant, using Terry's phrase, as a red herring.

Many people in the past have addressed the problem of whether enough nuclear plants could be constructed to replace fossil fuels before the latter are exhausted. Therefore, I'll consider the new defence now put

forward: their role in controlling CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. I will assume for this purpose that public opinion embraces nuclear power wholeheartedly, that there are no waste disposal problems or any other contentious issues obstructing a whole hearted commitment world-wide to constructing sufficient plants. Similarly, I will assume that these plants can be built to time and budget and operated both safely and efficiently.

Next, I'll operate on the assumption that the figure produced by the World Climate Programme Workshops in 1985-1987 (set up by the World Meteorological Organisation, and agency of the United Nations) is correct. These scientists concluded that a 50% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> is needed to keep global warming rates down to 0.1 degrees centigrade a decade.

Electricity produces 35% of the world CO<sub>2</sub> emissions though only 15% of world energy. At present, nuclear power produces about 3% of world energy needs. It follows, therefore, that even if nuclear power replaced fossil fuels in the generation of electricity, 65% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would still result from use of wood and fossil fuels in transportation, industry and domestic heating, etc. And these three areas are all increasing their energy demand.

To explain why I don't envisage nuclear power (or any other non-CO<sub>2</sub> emitting energy production) as the answer to the global warming problem, I'll turn to some scenarios produced by a couple of energy researchers at the Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado. Gregory Kats and Bill Keepin, in common with others in their profession, use scenarios based on current trends to estimate future demand for energy and the success of various strategies in meeting this. In the scenarios in question they considered the impact of nuclear plants on reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>, bearing in mind the WCP estimates. A high energy demand (360% increase by 2020) and a medium demand (210%) were examined. A third scenario proposed a 10% increase based on energy efficient methods. The first two scenarios used the latest figures by government and other scientific institutes to predict future energy demand.

With the goal of replacing coal-fired plants with nuclear ones by the target dates, they found that, with the highest demand, 8,000 large nuclear plants would have to be built, at a rate of one every day and a half, at a cost of 227 billion dollars per year. With the middle demand (210% increase) one must be built every three days at 144 billion dollars per years to construct 5,000 large plants by 2020. Forty percent of these reactors, in the two scenarios, would have to be built in less developed countries..

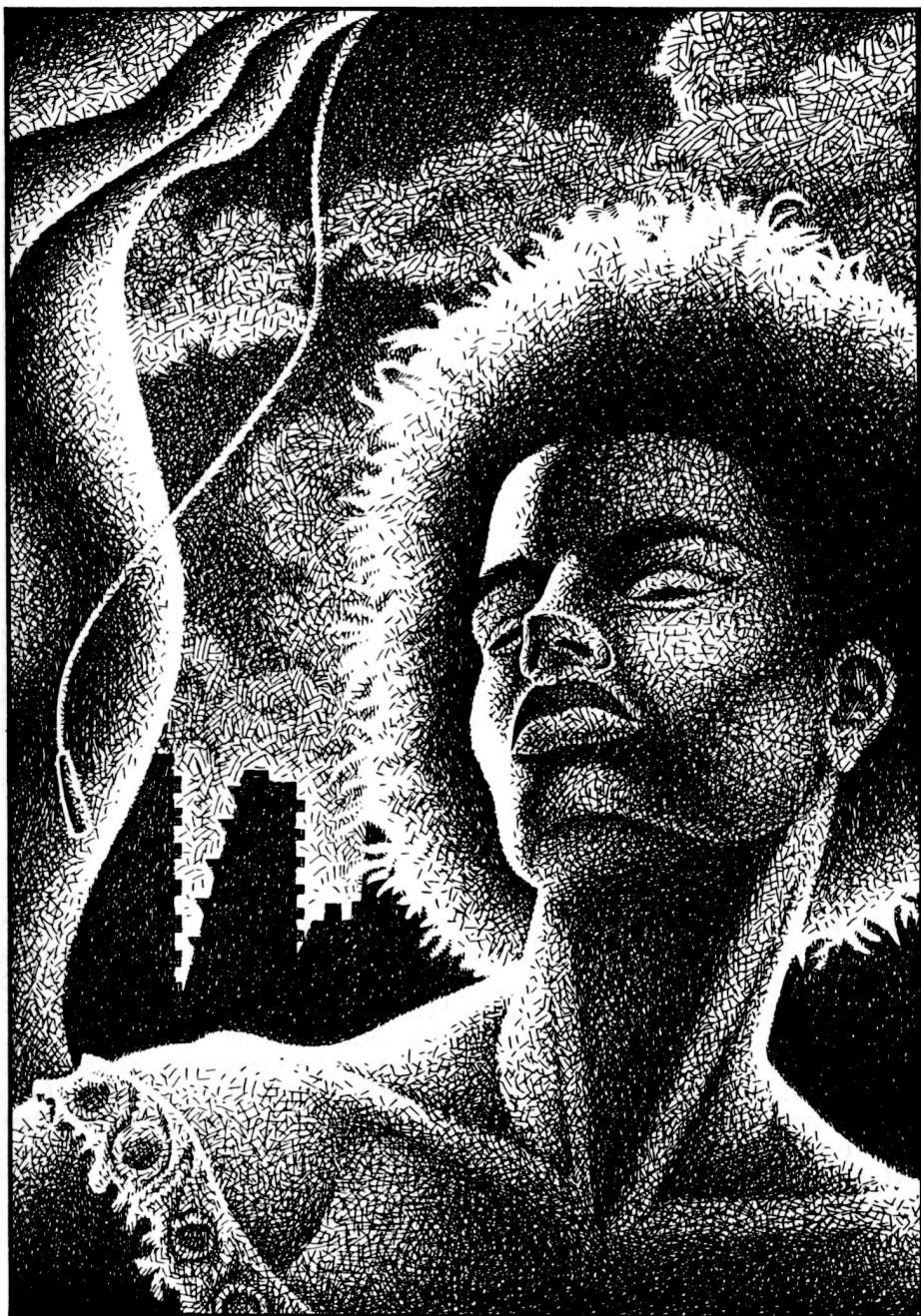
Leaving aside the cost and social consequences of diverting so much money and effort into an engineering project which dwarfs any previous

one, especially in poor countries, what would be the impact on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions be? Well, in the first one, stalemate, since rates of increase of non-electrical use produced a 65% increase in emissions by 2020. In the second, a 10% increase would result.

Looking at a more feasible construction plan, Kats and Keepin considered the benefit of building a plant every 7.5 days at a cost of 49 billion dollars per year. Using the high and medium energy growth rates, such a programme would barely effect CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

However, their comparative assessment of energy efficiency measures came out as seven times more efficient in cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than nuclear power.

Like Terry Jeeves I have reservations about wind and tidal power. However, energy saving measures (such as those set out in Chapter 7 of **The Greenhouse Effect** by Stewart Boyle and John Ardill) do offer hope. Otherwise, whatever we do can only be in the pursuit of an ever-receding goal: we can only reach the target cut in emissions if we reduce the amount of energy we use. If we cut CO<sub>2</sub> by turning to huge investment in nuclear power but continue our massive use of all other fuels we can only, at best, be like someone running on the spot on a speeding treadmill, and at worst we'll fall off with very unpleasant results. That is why I believe that nuclear power is just a red herring.



## Dear Mr Pringle,

Thank you for informing me of your current requirements for your new publishing venture, **Interzone Books**. It was most kind of your Mr Platt to explain how you cannot afford to experiment with "midlist" novels, but must seek out certain best-sellers based on proven previous successes. Accordingly I have made sure that every one of my proposed novels for you is a top-of-the list title! And so without further ado I am offering your company my latest typically original book proposals. I am sure you will agree that these four synopses are ideally suited to the adventurous editorial climate of modern publishing. The first one alone should easily merit an advance of £1,000,000, as you will see!

### 1. Young Gagool

The early life of the wicked witch from H. Rider Haggard's runaway best-seller and Hollywood success **King Solomon's Mines**, which recently starred Richard Chamberlain. You'll love spunky teenager Gagoolala – headstrong, beautiful, learning the dark arts of ju-ju and being initiated into womanhood. Wild romps with lovers! Crazy dancing to authentic African percussion! Yes, **Young Gagool** includes something for every conceivable reader – youth interest, ethnic black characters, threatened African wildlife, bare boobs, supernatural horror and a heavy rock soundtrack (in the movie and CD versions). The only thing it hasn't got is a plot, but my friend Angie who cleans at the college says as long as you call it "picaresque" nobody will notice. That's **Young Gagool**. Rush me the contract now! But don't stop reading – I've got plenty more new ideas where that one came from!

### 2. War Of The Worlds II

The heck with diseases wiping out Martian invaders; in my terrific sequel some tougher Marties drop in who don't catch cold so easy, and the real battle begins! And the Marties destroy someplace worth destroying this time – Texas, no less, not crummy old England. Cylinders crash onto houses! Families wiped out! Panicked citizens crisped by Heat Rays! Handling Machines go stomping attorneys on sidewalks! (Note authentic U.S. background!) Tendrils of the Red Weed strangle everybody in sight! All good stuff eh? To add the personal human touch, each time my hero screws a girl some rotten Martie corpses her, so he has to find some other girl to screw – then the Martians stiff her, and so on. But the best bit, which I save for his seventeenth girl, is that the Martians feed on human blood so are really vampires! It can't miss!

(And if it sells really good my next sequel can turn the Martians into Nazis as well!)

Now for my third brilliant book idea.

### 3. Sherlock Holmes Versus Billy Bunter And Roy Of The Rovers

The most baffling case yet for Sherlock Holmes and his highly-trained killer bees! Who stole the Christmas pudding where the missing atomic formula was hidden? Was it tall clean-cut honest-as-the-day team captain Roy of the Rovers, or was it lying cheating pickpocketing fat toad Billy Bunter? Sherlock Holmes needs all his legendary deductive abilities to crack this one! And as the mad scientist's radium capsule plunges sparking and fizzing towards his goolies, Holmes faces injuries even worse than Dr Watson's old war wound! Only the spirit voice of Irene Adler can save him. This incredible yet believable climax will tug at the heartstrings of every reader. (Hint: Billy Bunter is a ventriloquist!)

I must advise you that the Japanese and Philippine options on the film rights are already taken.

### 4. Immortal Masters Of Dune

This will have all the old characters whoever they are, sand, spices, sandworms, confrontations, probing of motives and intellectual stuff like that, all leading to the realisation that war is inevitable. It will be 500,000 words long and the ending will leave enough loose ends for a dozen sequels. Need I say more?

(Licence from the Estate of Frank Herbert applied for.)

So Mr Pringle, the above are my four proposals for **Interzone Books**. They are exactly what you modern publishers are looking for. Sample chapters are available if required, just give me a couple of minutes to dictate something down the phone, but otherwise simply send me the contracts as follows:-

<b>Young Gagool</b>	£100,000
<b>War Of The Worlds II</b>	£100,000
<b>Sherlock Holmes / Billy Bunter</b>	£250,000
<b>Immortal Master Of Dune</b>	<u>£1,500,000</u>
	£1,950,000

Once I have received the usual 50% advance from **Interzone**, say about £1,000,000 in round figures, I will hire some old hack to do the actual writing: I myself will settle down to compose my long-projected SF novel with all my intended style, integrity, living breathing characters and truly original ideas. (If I can still remember how.)

Hoping to hear from your accountant very soon,

Yours very sincerely,

**David Redd**

P.S. Be warned: I have copyrighted my brilliant ideas by posting myself a copy of this letter, as advised in the correspondence course I am taking, so if my ideas appear **anywhere else** my lawyers will be busy! Your hopeful author, D.R.

**Dorothy Davies**

## **The Technology Of Communication**

OR

**How to run a hi-tech  
communications business  
in the 1990s**

Imagine this. A business man is sitting at his desk dictating into a machine which instantly records his every word, hesitation and thought. The tape from said machine is passed to a secretary who transcribes it on a machine which consists of a screen, a keyboard and a printer, and who makes the document/letter/whatever look like a perfect piece of work. Said document is folded, placed in an envelope which is then passed through another machine which automatically stamps the right fee on it for posting, and records the cost in its depths as well.

With me so far? Good. The scene changes to the Post Office. A man comes along in a little/big red van, and collects bundles of first or second class metered mail. It goes in a bag with all the other first or second class

metered mail. Stamped mail goes separately. Postman also collects money, Girobank envelopes, registered, special delivery, express delivery, parcels and packets and whatever else has been handed in that day. It all goes in the back of the van.

So far, so good. Just as the postman is shutting the van, the junior from our above office comes rushing along with the metered mail. Late, of course. "All right" says the postman. "I'll take it." Now, what the postman *should* do is climb into the back of the van, find and open the bag with first/second class metered mail in it and add the bundle. In fact, he throws it into the first bag he sees, because he has a deadline to keep, and a twelve mile drive ahead of him through rush hour traffic.

Human fallibility is already

creeping into the system, do you notice?

Our postman drives to Swindon. He is there in his van along with all the other vans from all the other sub-offices from up to thirty miles radius. They are all trying to get on the ramp to unload their bags, their Girobank envelopes, money, etc. There is limited space. There is limited personnel. They often have to wait up to ten minutes to get on the ramp. Then they have to go looking for a trolley. Finally our postman gets inside, and goes looking for the huge containers for first/second class metered mail, first/second class stamped mail, etc. It is never in the same place two days running. Sometimes he says "to hell with it" and tosses it into the first container he sees. He hands in the registered, express, special delivery, which means he puts it onto a counter with heaps and heaps of other mail and hopes someone will see it. (For a time the Post Office demanded each postman get a signature for what they delivered, but no one was ever prepared to sign for the consignment – who wants their neck on the line when it goes wrong? – so the idea was dropped.)

Our postman has left now, gone home to his rightful rest. In the main office, the mail is being sorted, people are falling over bags of mail, there is mail coming and going, taken away to meet the trains or the big lorries to trundle it around the country, taken to the airport for the European and overseas flights. The pressure is on, boys, the Postmaster wants it all cleared! As the end of the shift ap-

proaches, the postman gather up bundles of mail and dump them in the first available bag, no matter where it is going. Just so long as the benches are cleared.

The hands of the clock speed round, it is 3 a.m. Someone employed by the local sorting office here in Faringdon is up and about, getting ready for a forty mile round trip to Oxford to collect mail.

4.15 a.m. My postman (my husband) gets up and goes off to work. He has to be there at ten to five, security, not that one person can fight off a determined burglar, and in any event, if the Post Office is to be burgled, they do it in the night (they have, three times in the past few years.)

5 a.m. Bags of mail are arriving from Swindon and they already have the bags from Oxford, provided a/ no one has broken down or had an accident and b/ Oxford know where the mail is to hand over (sometimes the person drives back empty handed and the mail has to wait another twenty-four hours). It is sorted into 'rounds', which means people need a working knowledge of every area in a six mile radius from the sorting office, or how else would you know where the mail has to go? And in that mail being sorted there are up to seventy-five letters which have no relation to our town whatsoever. Like, for example, letters to Holland, or America, Crewe, Liverpool, you name it, it is there. Like for example the couple of hundred rebate (junk) mail which was all for Guildford, Surrey. These are the mis-sorts, caused by the overnight dumping. The Post Office know

it is going on, they send men out to check it and then do nothing about it.

10 to 6 and each postman is at his own bench, sorting the mail into the order in which he will deliver it that morning. He is also sorting the household deliveries, those leaflets that come dropping through the door. Postmen hate them. Sometimes they are glossy, which makes the bundle slippery, or larger than average letters, which makes the bundles awkward. And most of all, it often means going places he would not otherwise go, which wouldn't matter except he knows nine out of ten people throw the leaflet in the rubbish – along with the rebate mail.

7 a.m., and he is out on the road. loaded with mail, parcels, packets, money to deliver to sub post offices, Girobank envelopes, registered and special delivery letters. As he goes on his round, dropping letters through the doors, getting people to sign for registereds, etc, he is also collecting mail from post boxes. This is then taken to the main office...

The point of all this is – that high tech system I started with ends up with someone on a bicycle riding up a road and putting that letter through someone's door. State of the art technology eventually comes down to everyone getting up on time, not being sick, hung over, or generally tired out. It depends on vans starting in frost, damp, snow and ice. It depends on lorries arriving on time with bags of mail. It depends on people, and they are the most fallible creatures of all.

Recently while my husband was

on leave, one of the newer recruits did £1000 of damage to the van allocated to my husband. It was 6.15 p.m., the man was tired, he had been on the run to Oxford at 3.30 that morning. This is how we are running our communication system in the 1990s, with poorly paid personnel and understaffed offices.

Next time your first class letter takes three days to arrive, or your second class takes 2 weeks, remember my article. And when the Post Office is criticised for not keeping to its promises, remember it is a labour-intensive industry, which has yet to catch up with the modern world. But don't let that stop you complaining!

Remember when you see inflated wages printed in newspapers that the only people earning those wages are those in the big offices, Mount Pleasant, etc, where the overtime is practically compulsory or the system would break down, the shifts are difficult, the system creaking at the seams. Out here in the rurals there is no chance to earn £250 a week or anything like it. I have to go to work to maintain our standard of living, on top of my earnings as a writer. Remember also *all* post personnel have to sign the Official Secrets Act – I can say all this, Vic can't!

The System could work – it can work – but it needs more Indians and a lot less chiefs. It needs a vast injection of capital and a commitment to the labour force. (It needs a stronger union, but that's sacrilege of course, and only being written because my shop steward husband is not around at the moment!)



Don't be blinded by the new proposal for Sunday collections. That mail won't go anywhere, won't be sorted and despatched ready for delivery on Monday morning. The Post Office want to introduce it on a 'voluntary' basis (but who covers for holidays and sickness?) as a public relations exercise. Mail isn't touched from Saturday lunch time until Sunday evening.

Which brings me right round to the reason why I wrote this article in the first place. I had an urgent telephone call Saturday morning, asking me to photocopy a batch of documents and Datapost them so they would arrive Monday. I photocopied them, and Dataposted them. It cost fourteen

pounds.

Vic came home 7 a.m. Monday morning to tell me my Datapost was still in Swindon, that it had gone nowhere, not even into the Datapost locker, because the Post Office shouldn't have accepted it on a Saturday. At twelve noon all Sorting Offices shut.

Communications in the 1990s still depends on communication between offices (Faringdon denied knowing, Swindon said they did) and on people getting up at ungodly hours to work, and falling asleep most afternoons.

And I wonder, isn't there a better way than this?

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## Lopping The Blues

*(Well, here we go again. Slightly more pages this time, though the increase is offset by including illustrations, but it's a couple of pages up in real terms, I guess. First off, Skel discovers the true purpose of the Open University)*

**Skel: (10/12/89)**

I dunno....one day I get a letter saying you've just put **SB3** in the hands of the printers, and the very next day I get **SB3** itself. Damned efficient printers, if you ask me. Now I understand why you were writing of having all this lovely government money that you were frittering away on upgrading equipment that was already perfectly satisfactory. You're secretly part of the defense budget, aren't you? That's why you've got so much surplus cash to throw around. The OU print shop is our Quick Response Deterrent. If anybody declares war us the OU print shop will, by return of post, bury them in an

avalanche of junk mail that it will take them a week just to open and bin. By the time they're ready to get round to actually launching an attack we'll have scarpered. When the missiles land they will all be franked 'Gone Away' or 'Not Known At This Address' and 'Return To Sender' (as most of my mail is now), then sent back to ultimately explode at their point of origin. When you get right down to it that's a pretty innovative Defense Policy, and one whose fallout seems to be benefitting the Department of Education. And to think they laughed at that wonderful Mrs Thatcher when she said the future of the country was in safe hands. (25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, SR2 5NW.)

*(The Official Secrets Acts forbids me to comment on the above allegations - suffice to say that if the Evil Empire of The East really disappears, then I shall start worrying!)*

## Shipyard Blues

*(Next up, a late loc on SB2 that I thought well worth including)*

### A-Bounding With Talents...

**Marie Rengstorff: (11/89)**

I teach neurology and strange related controversial subjects like the evolution of man. I'm also president of our local writers critique group. We all have the distinction of being professional writers, but just barely, and most write SF and non-fiction from neurology to cryonics to engineering to how-to-buy-a-car. Our meetings are never boring.

For me, Syd's article 'Confessions of a Writing Tutor', hit home the most. One of our college's instructors teaches how to write children's fiction. She joined the local writers' critique group for a short period. We were too mean for her taste. I was shocked to learn she had no concept of a plot; she had never written a story. She should have taken Syd's course.

I took one of the courses like the one described in Syd's 'Confessions of a Writing Tutor'. I had the opposite problem. Three times I complained to the instructor and/or executive in charge, "Quit telling me how wonderful I am and help me get better!" I demanded help to move me from an 'almost' into a 'paid' writer. By the third letter I said, "get brutally critical". (My work makes it through the slush piles to the top desks and I get long rejection letters from such top editors as SF's Gardner Dozois, Simon and Schuster's Stephanie Spinner, *Omni's* Ellen Datlow. They can always find something useful to complain about. I really appreciated Syd's comment, the tough part is "just sitting and thinking what is best for this student". That is what editors are doing when they write those rejection letters to some half-baked writer

like myself.)

When I started complaining about the writers' course, the instructor suggested I simply appreciate the joy and intrinsic reward of writing. I answered, "The intrinsic rewards be hanged. I want to become a regularly paid writer." To that, the executive of the organization responded, I was "expecting too much" of them. For a time I wondered if they meant I was expecting too much of me. But I decided if I could, in two years of writing SF, get those top-desk rejection letters, I could make it the rest of the way by following instructions. Besides, most of my non-fiction gets published. It took me 12 years of college to get that right. Some of that education must transfer to fiction.

I get the general impression that mail order writing courses are aimed at the basics and not at the near-miss level of writing. John Morressy, a college teacher of creative writing implies the same about many college courses in his August article in *SF and Fantasy Workshop*. He suggests that for those of us who no longer need moral support and can take hard, constructive criticism, we make it on writing, writing and

more writing. When feedback is necessary, we can get it from writers' critique groups, and I would add, by taking those letters of rejection seriously. I use mine as an exercise in writing. The next story I write, I make myself do what the editor suggested.

In addition, I ignore form rejections and, when an editor wants specific editing on a story, they get it within one week. About half the time, that story gets published.

Thank Syd for me for his insightful article. If I ever have the urge to try another writers' course, I would want it to be from someone like him who "welcome[s]... stu-



dents with a tendency to rebel".(P.O. Box 7037 South Lake Tahoe, CA 95731,USA)

## Fandom As It Is Spoke...

*(Changing tack to fannish matters, now, ranging over articles and letters in the last two issues.)*

**Lloyd Penney: (30/11/89)**

Vinø Clarke's letter seems a little harsh... a fanzine should reflect the editor and readers, all of whom reside, presumably, in reality. Fandom may be our Goddamned Hobby, or Way Of Life, but Mordor doesn't border with Yorkshire, Yggdrasil isn't growing at the foot of your garden, and you don't have the trumps to Amber. Even if you choose to escape into fantasy, reality will always be out there waiting for you should you choose to come out again. reality is the biggest part of our lives, so let's deal with it, and discuss it. Our main excursions into fantasy (and SF, for that matter) often are to conventions, where we party all weekend. What's waiting for us on Monday? Reality, with rent to pay and a job to go to and groceries to shop for. While I enjoy fantasy as much as any of us, I prefer a fanzine to reflect both reality and fantasy, or reality and my favourite genre of literature. For those still not convinced, look at it this way... working in reality brings real money, which allows me to enjoy fantasy that much more.(412-4 Lisa Street, Brampton, Ontario, L6T 4B6, Canada)

**Skel: (10/12/89)**

...I liked Terry Broome's remark that "Your writing should define its own market", though I think it required a dedicated misreading of Ken Lake's piece or intentions to bring out this self-evident truth. The greatest strength of SF's fanzines was always that they weren't generally produced for mass sale and hence one had no need to pander to perceived audience requirements. You published precisely what you wanted to publish (or as near as your talents could take you to that ideal), and then went looking for the precise audience that appreciated the things you wanted to do. As Kench pointed out too, it is irrelevant that these things may have been done before, and

maybe done better. Not by the editor in question they haven't, which is what counts.

Fanzine fandom is after all a hobby activity, but the accent is on 'activity'. You have to be involved, be active, you have to do things (publish fanzines, write for them, produce artwork, write letters). You could receive a few zines through subscribing, but no significant percentage. Those who need to be actively involved in any pastime will always be greatly outnumbered by those who seek only a passive involvement, those who just want to sit back and be entertained. SF was always a minority literature, but even there the number of passive readers was many orders of magnitude greater than those who became 'active' in fandom. Now, with the growth in popularity of SF in recent years, even fandom is increasingly becoming an audience non-participation environment, which is why traditional fanzine fandom, where active participation is essential, is becoming ever more irrelevant to fandom in general.

## More On Rushdie-vs-Islam

**Pete Crump: (28/1/90)**

I think some of your loccers were being a touch pedantic over James Parker's ill-chosen phrase "they are racist by definition, being English." Or were Leslie and Harry just being ironic in a heavy-handed sort of way? This is where I land with a heavy thump on the liberal side of the fence. Of course Salman Rushdie should be allowed to say whatever the hell he likes, and so should any Muslims who disagree with him. And so should the National Front. And so should the Nazis. And so should the Communist Party. Silencing groups of individuals whose views might be considered offensive or unpopular is a dangerous step to take, especially when you must consider just who is going to do the silencing. True, it would be better if filth like Nazi propaganda was never promulgated, and yet I think the answer lies not in suppressing it (which may lend it a dangerous mystique a la NF), but in allowing it and then educating people to see it for what it is. However, this now raises the question of just *who* is going to do the edu-

## Shipyard Blues

cating. There are no easy answers to this one, especially not for Salman Rushdie, poor sod. (11 Hazel Drive, Penyffordd, Near Chester, Clwyd GH4 ONF, North Wales)

**Ken Lake: (6/12/89)**

...Tip: before writing anything about Salman Rushdie, Islam, Arabs, Israel, Lebanon etc, everyone should read an over-long, regrettably repetitive but totally convincing book which enables westerners to don the mantle of Arabic thought and grasp how and why it all happens. **The Closed Circle, An Interpretation of the Arabs** by David Pryce-Jones (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989, £16.95), is available through your library and really is required reading by everyone (including you and me) with a desire to understand and discuss the contemporary world. (15 Markhouse Avenue LONDON E17 8AY)

### Doing The Loccol Blues

*(My bleeding heart editorial last time obviously got a few of you thinking.)*

**C.E.Nurse: (12/89)**

The vision of dozens of locs – 70% of the letters written to you in response to earlier issues, letters over which people sweated just as I sweat over the letters I write – lying gutted on the floor of your room I find oddly disturbing. No doubt if you hadn't mentioned it I would not be disturbed; on the other hand, if I had written one of those letters, perhaps I would now be wondering whether to bother writing another one. It is a fact of life that not everyone can have their say in 12 pages – deciding which to put in is, after all, what being an Editor is all about. Writing, on the other hand, is about trying to be heard. I wonder whether this event will decrease the number of locs you get, or whether, by increasing the 'competition' for space, it will mean that the standard of your letter column will rise. I ask myself: would this have happened if I had put 50p towards the cost of Shipyard Blues 2?

This reminds me of Ken Lake's statement: "so long as...people...are prepared to devote their time and energies to doing so for no profit whatsoever, we shall have

fanzines." While I fully accept that fanzines are a form of enterprise comparable to any that are undertaken for reasons other than profit – self-expression, communication, because it is something one feels ought to be done, or because it is fun and rewarding in itself – it seems to me that the statement is misleading, and in fact pernicious.

Fanzines, regardless of how cheaply produced, still cost money as well as time: the person needs equipment, postage, paper. It would be more correct to say that fanzines will always exist as long as the editors are willing to put their own money into it. To suggest that it is a matter of profit or non-profit is incorrect: people are willing to run the BSFA (for example) for no profit, but it would come to an end rather quickly if the editors had to do it at their own expense, and indeed would never have achieved 1000+ members if it had not instituted membership fees in the first place.

What is pernicious about the attitude is that it develops into a feeling that fanzines should be free, that is, that anyone who wants to do one must do it at his own expense, and that it is an insult of sorts to ask for money. This results in the 'natural' restriction of fanzines to a maximum size and to the cheapest methods, limited by just how much money the editor is willing to put into it, and unaffected by how many people are interested in it or might like to get it. Fanzines therefore always remain fanzines, not because they are 'non-profit', but because, regardless of how good they are, no-one else is willing to pay for the pleasure they get out of them.

I quite understand that locs are a form of payment (of time), and I'm not denigrating that. I'm also not denigrating the desire to do something without wanting to make a profit from it, or indeed to ask anything for it but a few minutes of attention. What I am denigrating is the presumption that someone is doing something for profit if he asks money for it, and the consequent righteous hostility to any such request. While I am sure Ken Lake has put as much back in to fandom as he has received out of it, I suspect that the amount of fannish passion and

fervour that never received voice (or was driven out of fandom) because their possessors could not afford to publish from their own resources dwarfs the library he did collect. Meanwhile, everywhere there are things crying out to be done and people crying out to do them, all because people are not willing to put in the tuppence that it is worth to them. I would submit that fandom, with its parasitism on those who do put in the time and money (such as yourself, John), does not rise above this...(49 Station Road Haxby, York YO3 8LU)

**Harry Warner jr: (6/2/90)**

Your decision to fence in the loc section to the final one-third of the fanzine seems a reasonable one. I can't conscientiously claim locs get too much emphasis in fanzines because that would be imperilling my own fannish livelihood. But I do feel the biggest lack in contemporary fanzines is articles and columns of substantial length, and there just isn't room for many of them when a loc section begins to dominate most of the pages of a fanzine. (It would be interesting to survey a large pile of recent fanzines and determine how many pages of their total were occupied by locs, fanzine reviews, and con reports.)(423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740 USA)

*(I hope there are enough articles of varying lengths in this issue to keep you happy, Harry.)*

**Chuck's Furry Again!**

*(Chuck Connor's piece on our furry fiends provoked a number of comments.)*

**David Redd: (9/12/89)**

Good contributions too. I read 'Let The Fur Be with you' straight through, muttering occasionally & growling "But I don't like reading about werewolves" and still reading every word. Hypnotic

reading even where I wanted to stand up and shout at Chuck. *(Plas-hyfryd 48 Cardigan Road Haverfordwest Dyfed SA61 2QN)*

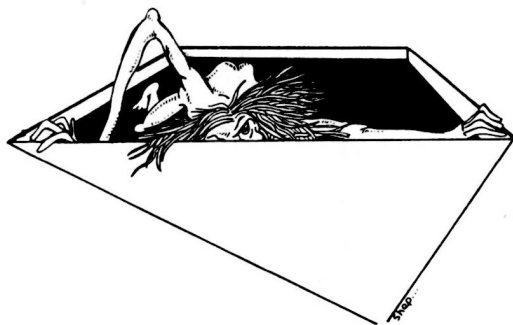
**Peter Smith: (14/12/89)**

Chuck has another bite at werewolves, all quite interesting stuff. Much the same points apply to this mouthful as to Chuck's previous outing, and Tony Chester's too. Firstly, the word 'were' itself is common to latin and english as well as scandinavian. Anglo-saxon has 'were', latin has the cognate 'vir'. Secodly, iron is not the metal of magic - it is usually considered as being magically inert and even an insulator against magic, e.g. fairies can't abide the stuff. There was a superstition that the living dead should be buried in iron coffins rather than wood so they stayed put instead of resurfacing.

Chuck is perfectly correct to say legends of werewolves and shape-changers are worldwide. The Navaho legends (collected together into a recent editon of *Dine Bahane* in a modern version which includes the sexually explicit incidents left out of the puritannical scholars of the past) make very interesting reading. I found it very off-putting at first that everything happens in fours, rather than threes as would be the case with Indo-European folklore. For the Navahos it would be fourth time lucky, not third time.

There are arguments that werewolf and shapechangers derive from Neolithic magical practices, wherein the 'shamans' would don animal masks to perform sympathetic magical rites. It is argued in *The Gate Of*

*Horn* that, over the centuries, this has mutated into ideas of shapechangers, as well as the animal-headed Egyptian deities. It may well be far-fetched to suggest that werewolves were borne in the Auverginian



# Shipyard Blues

caves, but other Stone Age cult practices have survived, albeit in weird forms. The practice of covering the dead with red ochre has survived or evolved over the years to profoundly influence alchemy and the quest for elixirs of life. (16a Abbots Park, St Albans, Herts, AL1 1TW — note COA)

## Pavel Gregoric Jr: (23/1/90)

Chuck Connor's article on werewolfery is *real* fannish stuff. I wish there were more of such terrific factual (maybe even scientific) observations of various topics mixed with a hilarious fannish spirit.

Indeed, the wolf has become an object of superstitious stories because of its erratic and uncertain nature. When satiated — or, more correctly, not hungry — a wolf is a cunning, sly and rather cautious creature, but then it drastically changes its temper when feeling hunger. Then it becomes a daring beast that knows no fear.

I'm surprised that Chuck forgot to mention the story of Romulus and Remus, that were fed and brought up by the holy she-wolf, which is by far the best known of all European legends concerning wolves.

In Chuck's witty description of the process of 'becoming a werewolf', he, probably on purpose, mixed up two things that are fairly often confused — superstition and magic.

Superstition is exactly what Chuck says — a fear of the unknown or unseen, together with a lack of diversions or entertainment that makes the imagination of primitive man go wild with yarns of evil creatures like zombies, witches, vampires, goblins and so forth.

And I think magic is correctly defined as a science with inadequate methods. The point of magic is 'healing' or 'cursing' by performing different rites that will satisfy 'gods', thus obeying their will. Here's the link between magic and religion, and the two are necessarily associated. Religion is one way of satisfying the needs

of human beings to understand the world they live in. And magic is a practical application of religious beliefs in primitive cultures. Magic borrowed from religion, religion incorporated what we call magic, and in any period an alien religion was apt to be viewed as magic. The Greek word for magic, 'magia' originally referred to the religion of the Persians — rituals that were not understood by the Greeks were not religion but magic. "Only we have the right religion. They have demons, not gods," a Greek prophet wrote. (Tuskanac 22, 41000 Zagreb, Yugoslavia)

## Julie Vaux: (25/2/90)

Chuck Connor's article on Werewolves was excellent. I noticed he covered some of the classical lore as well that of the later ages of European culture. However it was a king of Arcadia in Greece who was turned into a wolf, one Lycaon and legend also has it that every seven or nine years an arcadian man abandoned human garb, swam across a river and lived with the wolves or became a werewolf. This voluntary werewolf was supposed to keep the wild pack away from the herds of Arcady. (14 Zara Rd, Willoughby, NSW 2068, Australia)

## Comics As A Way Of Strife

(Comics seem to be a great divider in fandom, if response to Hilary Robinson's piece is anything to go by.)

## David Redd: (9/12/89)

Hilary Robinson's piece was... good, and I was really disappointed to turn the page and find another article. Sorry, Mic. Hilary left out one all-important episode: why and how did she change from short stories to comics? We need to know. A sequel is needed, if she survives the fannish comments/backlash long enough to write it.

Actually Hilary's article is an example of what I look for in fanzines — I agree with Eric Bentcliffe in that I look for things which aren't



found elsewhere in "my converse with the mundane world," as Eric puts it. But then I'm fairly ancient myself compared to these new young 'uns....

**Shep Kirkbride: (12/89)**

On about good articles, I really enjoyed Hilary Robinson's article on writing for comics. Nice to see someone unashamed of being a comic book writer. Being an avid comics fan myself I understand how she has probably suffered from the narrow mindedness of some so-called 'Serious SF fans'.

Hilary mentioned Alan Moore. I have always been a **Swamp Thing** fan right from the start, as far back as the Berni Wrightson days. But when Alan Moore took over the writing chores for Swampy, he changed people's attitude towards comics all over the world. I for one am very grateful for this, as he brought a lot of closet comic fans out and now the 'comic' is taken as a serious art form and gained the respect it so richly deserves. (42 Green Lane, Belle Vue, Carlisle, Cumbria)

**John F. Haines: (7/12/89)**

I found Hilary Robinson's article both warm and humorous. I know how she feels as a writer on the 'fringe' of SF because I have similar problems: you tell someone you write poetry, they say "how interesting", or "that's nice" – tell them you write *science fiction* poetry and the usual reaction is one of puzzled frowns, followed by a quick excuse for a fast exit ("gotta get away from this nutter!"). Similarly, poetry mags tend to regard SF poets as being slightly warped. SF mags infer that you are wasting your time when you should be writing short stories and novels, ignoring the fact that some of us prefer working in a poetic medium, rather than a prose one – and if you dare point out that **Paradise Lost**, **The Divine Comedy** and **The Fairie Queene** can all be regarded as fantasy novels that just happen to be written in verse... (5 Cross Farm, Station Road, Padgate, Warrington, WA2 0QG)

**Andy Sawyer: (10/12/89)**

Isn't Hilary a bit out of touch? I mean, I thought *everyone* in the SF world wanted to

be a comics writer nowadays, what with Alan Moore being on everyone's list of "My Hero" and Mary Gentle working on graphic novels and Neil Gaiman's **The Sandman** and **Black Orchid** receiving the kind of remarks that Booker Prize winners get from their publicity departments. Go to it Hilary – you're *hip*! Actually, that idea about the same script presented to half a dozen artists is a wonderful one – has it ever been done? I'd like to see it – it would be like different productions of the same play: you could probably get wonderful things out of it if it was a good script to begin with. What about it, Titan? (1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral, L64 4BT)

**Ving Clarke: (1/90)**

Hilary Robinson's article was interesting, but merely confirmed that there's no intellectual defence of the 'comic'. She writes them for money, and good for her. But when one considers the fact that in the USA, the home of the 'comic', there's 10% 'functional illiteracy', one wonders how much damage the essentially simplistic nature of the genre is doing. It may be that in Hilary's world 'the sunset is going to be black and white' – in the adult world there are greys. (16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, DA16 2BN)

**Harry Warner: (6/2/90)**

Even though I've never been a comic book reader, I'm amused by Hilary Robinson's little essay about the problems involved in writing the texts for them. She might take comfort from the fact that there is another breed of writers who have similar problems to hers: opera librettists. They are rarely listed among poets even if they write their librettos in verse, and when an opera fails, the critics almost always blame the libretto rather than the music or the staging. In truth, Italian opera librettists sometimes give the impression of knowing only a dozen words like vendetta, morte, t'amo, sangue, and evviva, but there's a real art in writing words for an opera and I'm sure Hilary has artistic accomplishments when she gives the artists something to letter in the balloons of comic books, etc.

## Shipyard Blues

*(Hm, and of course there are many 'Comic' Operas, aren't there, Harry. (Sorry!))*

### Junk Journalist Jibes

*(Throwing missiles (or missives) at journalists seems to have become a national sport nowadays: Shep insists that it isn't always deserved.)*

### Shep Kirkbride: (12/89)

Mic Rogers... seems a bit confused and unsure about her feelings. Being in the newspaper trade myself (hiss! boo!) I have to come to the defence of the poor, often misunderstood journalist, quite a lot of whom I count as my friends. Although I am on the page make-up side of newspapers, I still take a fair bit of flak in the pub etc. More often than not though it is to do with sports results, mis-spelling or lack of information. Believe it or not, very rarely do we get criticised for over-stepping the mark.

Take the Lockerbie air disaster for instance. For all that was a very delicate situation, not once were we criticised for intrusive journalism. In fact, to the contrary, our newspaper was commended for its handling of the situation by the local people. Within a few hours reporters from the national newspapers were in Carlisle knocking on the door demanding to know what we had. Journalists world-wide were ringing up offering ridiculous sums of money for exclusive rights. Yes, I agree, that is heartless, but sadly, it's business.

So summing up, I would think that Mic is painting us all with the same brush. Although the national newspapers are undoubtedly guilty of intrusive journalism at times, that does not mean that all journalism is intrusive. Provincial newspapers are a different beast altogether from the nationals. They depend on the local readership a lot more and so, in my opinion, are a little bit more caring of their readership. The bare facts don't always work I'm afraid Mic. Everyone has to put over their point of view, albeit biased, and it's hard for a reporter not to flesh the story out. Take your own article for instance. Would it have been as interesting if you had just stuck to the basics? Sorry

to sound so critical Mic, but it isn't often I get the chance to reply to an argument that crops up at very regular intervals.

### Ian Mundell: (16/12/89)

On the subject of intrusive journalism, I must admit that the behaviour of journalists does sometimes seem both trivial and a little morbid. I don't just mean dealing with the bereaved, but also things such as the delight they sometimes show at major disasters, etc. Forever chasing a story alters the point of view, and creates strange attitudes much like those that doctors involved with accident and emergency sometimes show. To get back to the point, it is important for a journalist to report the story and not to construct it (despite how it seems sometimes at the lower end of the market). To get information out of someone, which is essentially what the job is about, you must carry on asking questions, however mundane they might be. You cannot ask "was it a gang killing... was it the scientologists trying to reclaim your son's soul... was it the fault of the local council's persistent failure to make the roads safe." That is both unethical, and also unreliable since people in shock can be unusually suggestible. The questions about how a bereaved mother feels, or what her little Asquith did for a hobby are calculated to summon up more important, newsworthy pieces of information that will either make a story in themselves, or form the start of something else.

Now, when it comes to *publishing* that Mrs Bodensee (38) is delighted that little Asquith is jam sponge, because now she can throw out all those nasty squiffy (or whatever) books he used to read, I think that the motive has to be looked at very carefully. Sometimes it is justified, often it is not. (5 Sunnyhill Lane, Oare, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 4JG)

### Harry Warner: (6/2/90)

I don't share Mic Rogers' confidence that journalists can provide some valuable services by investigating wrongdoing. Too often it can produce results similar to lynchings and the Ku Klux Klan. Besides, a journalist who goes on the track of malefactors



may destroy the investigations of law enforcement officers by inadvertently alerting the criminals, or the resulting stories may make it impossible to get a court conviction after an arrest is finally made.

I do agree thoroughly with her about the wrongness of the media's intrusion into people's privacy after tragedies or other major calamities. But this particular peccadillo of the media is just one aspect of the larger problem: the media is obsessed just now with publishing opinions rather than news. If the opinions sought happen to be those of the spouse of a murdered individual, it's just part of the larger pattern. Five days ago, Hagerstown almost had a race riot, which police prevented by intercepting several carloads of blacks who were heading into a white neighbourhood to keep an appointment for a street fight. To prevent disappointment to the hundreds who had gathered to watch, the whites then proceeded to start fighting among themselves, with a number of injuries to participants and police before order was finally restored. Since then the local newspapers have published stories every day quoting this and that authority and official and non-entity on their opinions of this episode, most of whom seem not to have seen the event. But I still haven't read any list of names of those arrested, what disposition has been made of their cases, how the injured are getting along, or other facts, just the opinions.

## **Buck Coulson: (20/1/90)**

I think one little fact answers Mic Rogers' article: nobody is *required* to talk to reporters. It's done for publicity by celebrities, to get one's own side in print by people indulging in controversy, and by grieving mothers apparently because they haven't got the gall to tell a reporter to bugger off. Which leads to another question: why don't they? Some do, as a matter of fact: I suppose one could do a survey of

newspapers and TV shows to discover what percentage of stories do *not* have grieving relatives or anyone else who might not want to have his or her privacy invaded. Though that wouldn't be entirely accurate: presumably some grieving relatives do want to have their grief publicised. One could even say that most people do – why else have big fancy funerals – but the percentage of those who want it to show on TV may be somewhat less. Or may not be: how does Mic know? (2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348, USA)

## **Ethel Lindsay: (20/12/89)**

Reflecting on Mic Rogers' article, I was reminded of hearing an actor talking who had honestly said he was a homosexual. He told of a journalist who paid two small boys to go to his home and try to persuade their way inside. The journalist was all ready, of course, to write a sensational story if the actor had believed the story being told by the children. Can you think of anything more horrific than that? (69 Barry Road, Carnoustie, Angus, DD7 7QQ)

## **Sydney J. Bounds : (7/12/90)**

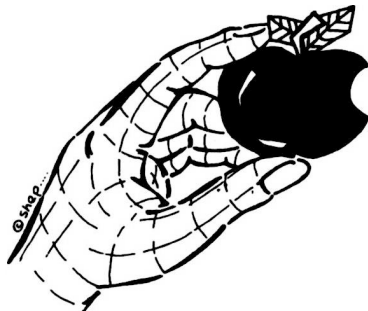
Chuck, Hilary and A.None, Reader were interesting, but the best article was by Mic Rogers. Bullying by BBC interviewers on radio is a disgrace; recently, a woman interviewer refused to allow the interviewed to answer her questions! If they carry on like this unchecked, they risk a good case being made out for stamping on the media altogether.

...It amuses/annoys me when people go on about "freedom of expression". Perhaps

it's only professionals who know how much editorial censoring goes unknown by readers. Freedom of expression is strictly a myth except in a very few amateur productions.

## **Still In Hiding, A. None?**

(The anonymous article on rotten books in



## Shipyard Blues

*the last issue got a number of people steamed up.)*

**Mike Glicksohn: (17/1/90)**

The idea of a trenchant article on sub-standard books by generally excellent authors is a good one, even if I don't agree with every book listed. It is weakened considerably, however, by its pseudonymous presentation. Personally I wouldn't have published it unless its author put his or her own name on the piece: it's a good piece, and nothing to be scared about or ashamed of having written.

**Ken Lake: (6/12/89)**

I was surprised to find you allowing an anonymous contribution – if the writer hasn't the guts to wear his own name, why should we bother to read him? His conclusions are both suspect and in some cases fallacious – for example, since **Trans-former** Mike Foster has published the third part of the trilogy, **Preserver**, as well as a collection of shorts entitled **Owl Time**, and he has several completed manuscripts in hand.

It's the sheer inequality of treatment that's so annoying here, though. Picking out **Neq the Sword** indicates he hasn't read many other Piers Anthony pieces of equal direness; Benford's **Timescape** is superior to much later writing; MZB surely doesn't deserve any consideration at all, with so much crap bearing her name; Delany's **Triton** is readable fun compared to most of his stuff; Gordon Dickson has other piss-poor books to his name including **Space Swimmers** and **Space Winners**. Haden's **Native Tongue** offered the keen philologist a great deal, but the sequel was unreadable; Joe Haldeman has never to my knowledge written a bad book apart from the pulpish items cowritten with Jack C; picking out Harry Harrison's **Rebel in Time** while ignoring the appalling follow-ups to **Bill the Galactic Hero** (which was fun) is like denouncing the **Daily Express** while ignoring **The Sun**. As for knocking Larry Niven's **Ringworld Engineers**, a more than competent space opera, while leaving **The Integral Trees** books unmentioned,

the mind boggles: at least the former didn't offend against simple credibility or present cardboard stereotypes as major characters.

**Terry Broome: (5/12/90)**

A.None's readers notes/opinions on books are interesting, if rather simplistic... and unfair, but I guess this is deliberate to encourage people to disagree (a trick I never did like). It's funny that I disagree with him about so many of the books. **Life In The West** is a fine novel, not without faults, but far from being flat and stilted, and it never reads like a travelogue. Of course, angst and adultery are not necessarily bad subjects for fiction. In fact, I think they're pretty good ones! **Timescape** was a brilliant novel with credible, fully fleshed characters – the only time to date Benford's pulled it off, I think. I think the invention of the Free Amazons is plausible within the construct of the Darkover universe – Darkovans are chauvinist, but it does not necessarily mean they're cruel or murderous. I agree with his comment on **Stand On Zanzibar**, as far as it goes, but the book never pretended to be a character study. It was experimental fiction and as such I believe it worked beautifully. ...**Native Tongue** – yes, a little too biased against men, but a good story nonetheless, whose real fault lay in the incredible contrivance of Isdar as a means towards freedom separate from men and the unrealistic portrayal of that as universally desirable for all women without discussions or war with the men.

...When I read **I Will Fear No Evil** I thought it was OK – large, boring, objectionable chunks, but it *did* have a plot and hence classifies as a novel, it being over so many thousand words. Where 'A.None' gets *his* definition of 'novel' is open to question. Some of his observations are agreeable – in fact most of them are – concerning many of Heinlein's books...

**Malafrena** is one of Le Guin's best novels. It's a beautiful novel, with characters and plot. Did 'A.None' actually finish the book? Is he totally lacking in objective criticism? Are his powers of observation so lacking? The only Le Guin book I've found

disappointing is **Threshold** which was beautifully written, but which ended in mid-story.

...One of the things 'A.None' overlooks is that when some of the books were written, certain themes and plots were still fresh and exciting, like Bob Shaw's **One Million Tomorrows**. It isn't anything special and over-uses its ideas and themes, but it was a good action adventure novel and never intended to be anything else... **Orbitsville Departure** was also a competent adventure – a few flaws, but nothing too drastic. A.None's simplistic assessment insults Shaw's talent.

...Finally, A.None's logic is hard to fathom at times. For example, he says of Vinge's novel that because the first half was rewritten the ending was awful. I fail to grasp how rewriting the *first* half makes the second bad. Failing to rewrite the *second* half can make it bad, or simply writing a poor ending makes it bad, but you can't prove this by saying the *first* half has been changed.

...To sum up my comments on 'Wrote And Rotten Books' then, I believe A.None is grossly unfair to the books. He fails to do them justice, making misleadingly selective criticisms, sometimes forsaking objective observations altogether, and his facts are occasionally wrong or in doubt. As a review column it is wholly inadequate, and I can see little point in it.

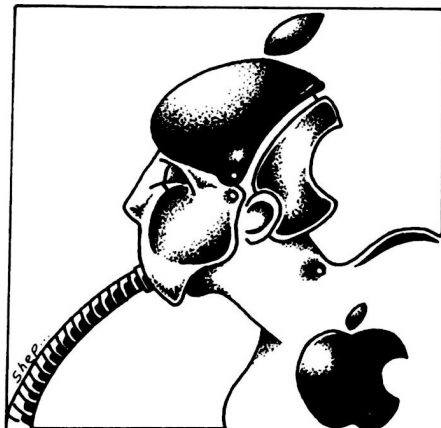
**John F. Haines: (7/12/89)**

Oh dear, sorry A.None, but **Stand On Zanzibar** and **Timescape** are both on my list of SF goodies that I've thoroughly enjoyed – bang goes my street cred. My pet hates over the last decade have included the rise, and dominance of, the *trilogy* – aarrgh! Tolkien,

you've got a lot to answer for! I pick a book up in the library, hmm – this looks good, then I read 'Part 97 of teh award winning megaseries set on the planet of Splurge...', sigh wistfully, and put it back on the shelf because I *know* that I'm never going to see the other 96 volumes... Please, writers, write *single* novels again! Most trilogies (quartets, etc) can easily be collapsed down to a single good book – the trilogy habit merely encourages literary diarrhoea and padding – look at Donaldson's overblown waste of planetary resources for a start – as a single, fairly *short* book it might have been OK. If you don't believe it can be done, go and read **Cloudrock** by Gary Kilworth and see what good writing can do.

Also, why do fantasy writers especially, assume that a good literary style involves being as archaic and arch as possible, larding every sentence with eftsoons, o'ers, prithees and all the rest of the pseudo medieval claptrap that ws garbage back in Elizabethan times? Main blame for the revival of this kind of stuff must go to 19th Century writers like Morris (who was actually able to do it quite convincingly). What I'd like to see is a fantasy novel written in taut, 20th Century prose. Historical novelists (good ones, anyway) don't write like that – they either recreate period language *accurately* (see Blish, **Doctor Mirabilis**), or write in good modern prose.

My last pet hate is the categorisation of SF/Fantasy/Horror etc that puts us all into tight little boxes, out of which you escape at your peril! I'm all for cross-fertilisation and mixing of genres – this banding into 'types' is for the benefit of publishers and booksellers, *not* for writers or readers. (That's another reason why SF poetry causes raised hackles



# Shipyard Blues

– it's an *impure* form.)

**Andy Sawyer: (10/12/89)**

Damn good look at the "Worst of...", though I'd quibble with a few. I'd include Asimov's **Robots And Empire** as the most unnecessary attempts to link his **Foundation** and **Robot** series, and Stephen King's **Cujo** as the most typical example of how a blockbuster writer can keep the outward form of blockbusting and lose his touch when it comes to the essence.

**Sue Thomason: (19/1/90)**

...I reserve most of my comment for A.None, because a lot of the books s/he's picked as turkeys are on my *favourites* list.

Bradley: **The Shattered Chain** – I find most of the Darkover books thin, not terribly well written, and uninteresting, but I'm fond of this one and its sequel **Thendara House**; in fact they're the only Darkover books I have, and I'd recommend them as the best bit of the series...

Delany: **Triton** – but it *isn't* a book about a crisis of sexual identity, not for me, anyway. It's got a fascinating society... it's about that society, an artificial environment. It's about someone unable to be happy (through his/her own choice) in a society which truly tries to give its citizens maximum choice and empowerment. It's about role-playing; butch-and-femme stereotypes and how people believe in them.

Elgin: **Native Tongue** – as I saw it, in this book men aren't awful because they're *men*, they're awful because they've been conditioned to be macho dominators. Elgin strongly suggests that men too are capable of redemption – ie, that the aliens are *wrong*. (111 Albemarle Road, York, North Yorks, YO2 1EP)

**Buck Coulson: (20/1/90)**

I pay no attention to criticisms signed 'A.None'. If he wants to disparage books he should have the guts to put his own name on the article, and accept the repercussions. If he can't do that, he should keep his computer shut.

**Julie Vaux: (25/2/90)**

As for your book reviews by 'A. None,

Reader' he does not seem to have noticed that the Amazons' society or the Order of Renunciates had their numbers sustained by both recruitment and progeny. Free Amazons were allowed lovers and bore children. Also, even celibate orders are sustained by adoption – despite secular opposition, there have been Buddhist as well as Christian monks and nuns for over a millenia. Your reviewer seems to have overlooked adoption as a sociological model but than again, if he's who I think he is, that's hardly surprising. As I commented in a previous letter to you, some people, especially 'A.None' have not realized there are elements of satire and parody in **Native Tongue** and **The Judas Rose** directed at current cultural assumptions about language and perception. It is a quite wicked funny book if you're familiar with certain theories of sociolinguistics!...

**Fanart And The Artist**

(*On your marks, fan artists – it's egoboo time – though it is getting a mite incestuous*)

**Shep Kirkbride: (12/89)**

I've deliberately left my comments on the artwork until the end this time. I always seem to start off with the art and then fizzle out at the end because of the fact that I am left drained by Krischan Holl's recent input. But he has done it again hasn't he? Unashamed sexist that I am, I have to say that the illo on page 22 is my favourite this time around. No doubt he is going to have a lot of the femme fans up in arms over this one. The very sensuous and erotic nymphette lying in a field of mushrooms, overshadowed by a giant phallic mushroom.... Come on, you don't expect to get away scot free with this one do you Krischan/John? I love it. It is undoubtedly beautiful and so well drawn. Mind you, that doesn't take away any of the admiration I have for the front cover. It is also excellent. His use of tones is superb. While I remember, I think you have managed to come up with the best compromise for your title when using a full page illo. I couldn't have suggested anything better than the zoomed affect you have used.

## Pete Crump: (28/1/90)

Enjoyed SB, as usual. Both Krischan Holl (is that a pseudonym?) pieces were up to the mark, the p22 artwork being the better by far of the two, mainly because he has confined himself to a central image with a (hi)story, whereas the cover looks somewhat posed and devoid of any mystery. Nothing terribly exciting about the subject matter, either – all the elements are a bit passe, but the technique is wonderful. Shep's there, doing a workman-like job right down the middle. The circular illo for the Chuck Connor article is an interesting departure from the rectangular norm, sort of a were-pizza (there, pizza! Oh, never mind...) There's less high-quality Shep around the Shipyards these days – I only hope you're saving him up for something really special.

Nice to see you're still supporting us second (and third) rank fanartists. Pavel Gregoric's piece doesn't quite make the grade – the rendition is very stiff and two-dimensional – but nothing acts like a spur to greater artistic endeavour than seeing your work published in such a prestigious mag. I suspect Pavel may be quite new to this fannish stuff (go on, tell me he's been knocking about for years) and so his style has yet to loosen up a bit. More power to your pen, Pavel, but get yourself some different nibs while you're at it!

Chuck Connor seems to be laying the blame for the lack of fanartists at the door of some artists because they "seem unable to go back to the basics of effective line drawing." 'Unwilling' would be nearer the mark, 'cos we're not all minimalists. As a sort of 'fringe' fanartist, I prefer working when I know my stuff will be reproduced well by a caring editor, and (as importantly) seen by a critical audience. I don't know what it's like now, but when I was active in fandom, artwork was used mostly for decorative purposes and attracted no criticism at all, good or bad. Besides, fans who subscribe to poor quality (repro-wise) zines probably don't do so for the high standard of artwork filling in the corners, and so they don't feel obliged to comment on it. I like to think that fans who subscribe to Shipyards Blues do so partly

for the artwork, so that's where I like my stuff to go (when I can get off my arse and do any, that is.) I've found my niche and I'm sticking in it.

*(But only if you can extricate yourself from your OU course for long enough, eh Pete?)*

## Earthly Disasters

*(Having had more than our fair share of 'natural' disasters, from wind and flood, we Brits are realising just how fragile our civilisation is.)*

## Sydney J. Bounds : (7/12/90)

...It's not only earthquakes that make you realise how fragile our society is. During the October big storm of a year or so ago, my bank was closed and Sainsbury's allowed only a dozen or so people into their supermarket at a time.

## Harry Warner: (6/2/90)

You're right about the mess that results when electricity is interrupted. I've been able to write locs after lightning cut off the power in this area because of my non-electric typewriter, however. I keep enough cash on hand to get along in case local banks are without power for long periods of time, but even that doesn't do me too much good because most stores lack enough windows to provide visibility when the power is off and must close, and practically all of them have electronic cash registers that are paralyzed without current. I keep a battery powered transistor radio and a flashlight within easy reach and the smoke detectors work off their own batteries rather than line current but there's not much else a fellow can do to maintain civilisation during a power failure.

## Praising IDOMO

*(Andy Sawyer just won't leave this one alone)*

## Andy Sawyer: (10/12/89)

Hate to argue with Chuck – particularly in the light of his article in SB: I'll be watching out for ominous shadows, and eerie howlings in the night – but IDOMO was inspiring, it was, it was, it was! It inspired me – to keep on being involved in

## Shipyard Blues

this strange scene, if nothing else. Chuck's references to the punkzines is apt – there *was* a wonderful stew of magazines which had more influence from the sleeves of Sex Pistols singles than from SF and were all the better for it (and if I remember rightly, some of those people ended up as musicians on the tapes Chuck later compiled – **Suburban Relapse** and the like.) Some of this stuff came directly to me, but it was **IDOMO** more than anything else which kept me in touch with just what was going on. If it failed, it was probably because too many people (such as myself? Well, we are all guilty, comrades.) were prepared to consume rather than contribute. We can only expect one person to work on such a scale for so long without succumbing to meglomania, bankruptcy or both.

### An Attack Of The Realities

*(Now here's a turn-up for the books!)*

#### Vine Clarke: (1/90)

The letters are interesting – and virtually indistinguishable from those you get in any mundane newspaper or radio call-show. Except that there's three months delay between query and answer, which is inclined to damp one's enthusiasm a bit. I'd like to offer a small problem which has arisen locally, and which is not so clean-cut as the Salman Rushdie affair (that's just pure religious fanaticism).

Welling is a quite innocuous expanse of small homes, what used to be referred to as a 'dormitory suburb', on the south-eastern edge of greater London. For some reason the National Front has installed itself in a boarded-up shop, local rumour being that it's the NF national headquarters. There's a small rising tide of local opinion, pressure on the local (Tory-controlled) council, and each Saturday the centre of the town is flooded with excited people exhorting one to sign a petition asking for the NF to be kicked out.

There's no question in my mind that the aims of the NF are worthless, illogical, and aren't worthy of consideration. I spent nearly five years in the RAF helping in a small way to fight the spiritual ancestor of

the NF, the Nazis. But I also believe in free speech; in a democracy everyone has a right to be heard, etc, etc. Do I sign a petition?

No problem, you say. You don't support a political system that has one of its objectives the causing of harm to people. Great – except that you're then bogged down in a swamp of decisions. Refusing an advanced education to all causes harm to many. If you allow alcohol and tobacco, you're causing harm to many. If you allow abortion you're murdering thousands – according to some. If you allow a Jehovah's Witness to bring up a family in his/her beliefs, are you harming the kids? How about sales of arms overseas? Etc. etc. etc.

### The Big Switch — Or Is It?

*(The upheavals in Eastern Europe continue apace, as do the opinions about what really is fuelling them.)*

#### Harry Warner: (6/2/90)

Don't be too sure that the recent upheavals in communist areas won't lead to similar renovations in socialised nations. Decades of reasonably thorough socialism in nations like yours and much of Scandinavia haven't produced huge gains in the way of living for the masses and they have burdened the public with outrageous taxation. I suspect that eventually those nations will revert to a freer reign for capitalism much like that which now exists in the United States, simply because it has the best track record with all its faults.

#### Ken Cheslin: (11/12/89)

The media in particular seems to be running around like so many beheaded chickens over the events in Eastern Europe. Just like they blew up the chances of the Chinese students to make any real change in China, they are now making outrageous assertions of how 'democracy', sacred cow that they make it out to be, is sweeping away communism/socialism. What a load of cobblers! Some wider degree of control by the citizens, perhaps, but I can't see socialism collapsing, especially not to change it for something like the UK type of capitalism...*(10 Coney Green, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 1LA)*

## Watching The River Flow...

*(K.V.Bailey got a couple of you going with his comments on crowd behaviour.)*

**Ian Covell: (14/12/89)**

KV Bailey: just an instant thought, but have you yet seen anything on 'Chaos Theory'? This math concept suggests that 'order' is a relative concept; that what we interpret as order is only an isolated example of a pause in true chaos – so when we get 'glitches' in predicted patterns, it's only the true chaos under things peeping out for a moment. It's a disturbing theory (because by definition, there can be no laws governing chaos, mainly because you can never predict a starting point) but seems to delight quite a few mathematicians immensely.

**Ken Cheslin: (11/12/89)**

The K.V.Bailey letter raises some fascinating thoughts. No doubt some sort of triggering effect is quite widespread, such as one person lighting a cigarette and others are 'reminded' or stimulated. I can't count the number of times I've seen folk passing through a door, such as that of a library, with not a thought of opening the other panel, or even using the other door right beside it. All sorts of things, including I expect, 'fashion', could be explained by this tendency to follow.

## Bigotry Versus Bias...

*(Finally, Ken Lake's statement that bigotry makes for activity provoked this response)*

**Julie Vaux: (25/2/90)**

In response to Ken Lake's remark "without bigotry nothing would ever get done." I fear he confused bigotry with bias. It is the "tepid, colorless people who eschew controversy" who often prove the bigots of this world, for controversy means challenge and communication are happening. My dictionary defines bias as an inclination, a

slanting away like a weighted bowling veering on stubborn diagonals whereas bigotry involves linking to irrational attitudes.

Example 'A.None' is biased rather than being a bigot for he will at least discuss his attitudes. To my mind a bigot's thinking is closed to discussion. I see bias as a movement – one has bias against or towards whereas bigotry is a stationary position, guarded by thick walls.

But perhaps I am making too fine a semantic distinction? Still I can not perceive of many fans as bigots in the usual sense of the word. Many of us are eccentric and individual and opinionated indeed but actual bigots?

We do however all have sets of accumulated biases about ideas and people. Perhaps the difference between having a bias and being a bigot is that a bias is more easily changed than a bigot? Are we that locked into our heads that we're totally immune to positive change? Hopefully not.

I prefer to think of fans as often being, well,.....more.. positively passionate

## Wahfs & Strays:

Harry Andruschak; Sheryl Birkhead; Pam Boal; Judy Buffery (2); Chester Cuthbert; Martin Helsdon; Terry Jeeves; Mark Manning (SB2); Michigan Man (unidentified postcard); John Miller; Mark Nelson; David Palter; Peter Presford; Hilary Robinson; Mic Rogers (2); Steve Sneyd; Alan Sullivan; Martyn Taylor; David Thayer; Harry Turner; Roger Waddington; Bert Warnes (2).

*(And that's it for the issue, all wrapped up into fourteen and a half pages, though with about three quarters of a page worth of illos. So you've got an extra one and three quarter pages of loccol this time. Who knows, there may be more next time, if your letters are really good!)*



# Shipyard Blues

## *Rastus Muses*

Following on from the recent Poll Tax disturbances, a thought crossed my conspiracy-theory-ridden mind (they do so occasionally, rather like cosmic rays). Since the Militant Tendency are obviously of far more help to the Tories than to the Labour Party, maybe we should start considering them as an underground adjunct of the Young Conservatives, with recruitment slanted accordingly.

In a similar vein, the recent panic on the world money markets, with everyone selling pounds, seems to have started with the rumour that Mrs Thatcher was resigning. This is much too convenient (and far-fetched) an argument. Could it be that it was a deliberate ploy, triggered by friends of Mrs T, so as to provide an excuse for a really tough budget. The return of the good old "Gnomes of Zurich (or Tokyo)" ploy. Haven't seen that brought into play for a long time.

Still, it seems that the excruciatingly high interest rates are doing some good, since the profits generated by them for the high street banks are so large they've been able to write-off substantial amounts of their Third World debts, and still come up with increased dividends for their stockholders. Of course, what it means is that the British public is paying for the Third World debts via the back door, which is only fair, I guess. We're the ones that encouraged them in

their wastrel ways to start with, chiefly by example.

I purchased the Notting Hillbillies' excellent "Missing... presumed having a good time" album at the weekend, and I've already listened to it three or four times and it is growing in charm with every play. A combination of eclectic guitar playing, superbly chosen songs, and three distinctive yet complimentary voices make this a joy to listen to. The guitar work is laid-back yet stimulating, with excellent keyboard work filling in the tapestry of sound. The group consists of Mark Knopfler and Guy Fletcher (Dire Straits), plus Steve Phillips and Brendan Croker. Superb stuff—sod Dire Straits, Knopfler, let's have more of this music!

## *Credit Where Its Due*

OK folks, this is the line-up of goodies for this issue.

Articles are as follows:—K.V.Bailey (pp 5-8), Eric Mayer (pp 9-11), Martyn Taylor (pp 12-14), Andy Sawyer (pp 15-16), Pam Baddeley (pp 17-18), David Redd (pp 20-21), Dorothy Davies (pp 22-25).

Artwork credits are as follows:—Shep Kirkbride (cover, p14, all loccol art), Martin Helsdon (p4), Brad Foster (p11), Steven Fox (p16), Krischan Holl (p19).

Now you know who to blame! Here's to the next time. (June, maybe? Or is July more likely? Who knows?)



