



sikander

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I'm having trouble starting this letter. I've been sitting staring at my address above for nearly ten minutes, looking for the right way in. The thing is, SIKANDER 8 is such a solid, well thought out and well executed package that

I feel it deserves similar effort on my part by way of response. Alas, I enjoyed it too much. I can't wait. I've rushed straight to the typewriter with no thought or time for planning this letter's structure or approach. Ah well, you may, if you wish, console yourself with the knowledge that we so rarely get what we deserve.

Now you know as well as I which part of the zine is going to draw the bulk of the response, and quite rightly, but before I too hightail it out after the big game it is only fitting that I should mix my metaphors and at least mention the supporting players. The thing is, with just Ted's piece you wouldn't have had a fanzine. The message would have so overwhelmed the medium as to render it completely irrelevant. As it was, though I read Ted's piece first, I felt no sense of anti-climax when I finally got around to the other pieces - with the sole exception of Christine Ashby's piece, which I thought flew in ever decreasing circles and finally vanished up it's own semantic arsehole with it's pointless obsession with the difference between being prevented from doing something, and being compelled not to do it. Yes, there is a difference, but it only matters if you wanted to do it anyway, and the difference is purely in one's subjective reaction - emotional - and then it would depend on whether the compulsion/prevention was caused by happenstance or conscious intent. I won't belabour this point with examples, as I don't consider it worth the effort. My final thought is, 'Why blame it all on a cheese sandwich? What did the poor cheese butty do to deserve this? Was it that bad a sandwich?' Perhaps Christine's next article will be a thirty-page treatise on the semantic differences between a cheese sandwich on the one hand and two slices of bread and butter with some cheese between, on the other. Then again, probably not, as it is exceedingly difficult to type with a cheese sandwich in both hands.

David Grigg's 'Mutterings' is an excellent example of a certain type of fanwriting - well written, interesting reminiscences that entertain whilst not involving. Other than saying that I enjoyed it, and would almost certainly enjoy similar pieces in future, I am unable to respond to it. It does not make any personal connections. It will for some people, and they will probably respond at length. It screens the readers, but using a highly specific model - I too have been unemployed, but I don't match the model. I've had a few jobs but whichever way I turn them there is no similarity with this one. In fact I did once get a job as a base-grade clerk in public service (read 'Local Government') and was reasonably, though mindlessly, content in it for over 5 years. No, I enjoyed it, but I can't respond to it more positively - I've been screened out. As far as making a useful response is concerned, it is highly selective. Ted's piece, on the other hand (no, not the one with

the cheese sandwich), displays just the opposite characteristics - I'll bet everybody who reads it finds it, in some way, speaking directly to themselves. However, it isn't quite time for Ted's piece yet.

This means you. Pretty good this issue. Editorially, the best Australian fanzine I've seen for ages, and that includes Leigh Edmonds' zines, but this comment needs some supporting rationale and as this will probably leads us, nay, better say "...draw us remorselessly...", to Ted's article, let us put it on the back-burner for the timebeing.

An editor has several functions - firstly he conceives the structure and approach of his fanzine. This you have done rather well, or at least so it seems to me. It is 'about' fandom, and I like zines that are about fandom (as witness my own THE ZINE THAT HAS NO NAME 3, which was all about fandom, if read in the correct way). The Editorial presence is also represented by the editorial (seems logical), where such is present. Here again, your contribution was pretty good, though I could have done without the 'Junk Mail' section which was pretty banal and simply didn't do anything ("Gee, I get junk mail." *YAWN-don't we all?*"I send the envelopes back full of rubbish." *YAWN-don't we all?*) I really liked the bits about THREE IMAGINARY BOYS. "Bloody Hell." I thought, "Here I am, getting lots of Aussie fanzines of only marginal interest, and I never see what appears to have been the best of them all." An interesting hoax idea, and one which, in the context of fandom (and only there, I suspect) is completely believable. But again notice how one is being drawn towards the subject of Ted's piece whilst one still hasn't dealt with all the other points? There is an overwhelming attraction there. I'm spiralling in towards the core of SIKANDER 8 from the outskirts of its universe, and the nearer I get the harder it is not to be sucked in towards my inevitable completion.

This is what I meant about not having given this LoC the forethought it deserved. Had I planned it properly it would have been like being caught up in a whirlpool, slowly going around all the other subjects whilst being drawn from one to the next, remorselessly but logically, eventually ending inevitably at the centre, "Lost in Oz", the end of the universe which incorporates in itself the hope for the next cycle. As it is I have to keep putting the universe on 'Hold' and nipping back up the gravity-well a ways. Time flows backwards and we find ourselves further from the centre than we ought to be. For what is, hopefully, the last time then, let us skitter out again to the letter column.

Another one of the editor's functions, this - the orchestration of the response to previous stimuli, into a coherent whole that must forever represent a view of the entire spectrum of that response, ideally without distorting the overall impression left by that response. Obviously I can't pass judgement on how well you've achieved all these aims, but it feels right. The overall presentation too is certainly on the positive side of adequate. Nothing fancy but the production values are certainly neat and the execution is cleanly done, and I can't holdout anylongerbut ambeing drawninto Ted'spiece...aaarghhhhh!

...and of course as I am drawn into it I find many of my own comment-hooks which have been sucked in before me. Time has no meaning here, and therefore order and sequence are quite arbitrary. Walking about the surface of this singularity which is Ted's article one is presented with everything at once. It is all there, and the sequence one gives the various elements of it, the order one imposes, depends entirely on the path one chooses to take from one bit of fannish debris to the next. Everything here is subjective - I stand here next to the remains of my own LoC. Over there Q36 squats sullenly amid its own debris. Away beyond this are smaller mounds of remains all dismantled to varying degrees. Off to one side, quirkily distanced from everything else by a patch of bare surface, stands the edifice of RATAPLAN, hardly crumpled, almost as if it's claiming that it doesn't belong here at all. But let us leave it for others to wax poetic... I alas can only wane...

Ted doesn't believe in fudging the issue, does he? I suggest he will get a lot of flak for this, for it isn't easy being told that one's cherished fanzine - which until now has always seemed perfectly ok in comparison to the others around it, is really not up to much when one looks at fanzines in general. I know, having been on the receiving end of such comments. However, it is to be hoped that nobody takes Ted's criticisms so much to heart that they fold up their tents and steal away into the night of gafia. This, I'm sure, would be the last thing that Ted would want. I took my own share of early criticism far too personally but refused to let it put me off. Alas, I didn't benefit from it constructively either, and so my improvement as a fanzine publisher took far longer than it might have done. But Ted is right, there is nothing special about being creative. Well, not 'special' in that it is a rare talent. All of us can, with practice, improve that natural ability. We may not all be able to aspire to the very pinnacles of fanwriting but almost all of us have the ability, with practice, to be interesting - to entertain. Of course, one does need access to decent fanwriting in order to judge how far one's own efforts are falling short, and it is this very comparison which I feel Australian fanzine fans have been missing out on, and it is this very insularity which Ted bemoans. "A little cross-pollination never hurts." says Ted.

Of course, the cross-pollination he is talking about is a two-way thing and here we have an immediate problem. Immediately preceding this he said that he didn't mean that "...Poor Provincial Australia must look north of the equator for all its fannish cultural input..." Well, if it's input, then it must come from without, and where else are you going to get your fannish cultural input from? South America? This equates to Mae and Tony Strelkov and is hardly the breadth of input that Ted is talking about. South Africa? This is Nick Shears, if he's still active, and even more limited. New Zealand? God, the only New Zealand zines I've seen make almost all the Aussie fanzines look like Hugo-worthy material. Nope, any input of fannish culture must surely come from north of the equator. What I suspect that Ted meant was that this should not swamp the local fannish culture, should not supplant it, and that the cross-pollination should be a two-way thing, and as I said, that

presents an immediate problem.

If I were a fanzine publisher, I can't think of many Australian fanwriters that I'd be anxious to run articles by, certainly not from those Australians currently active. How then are Australian fans, and their fanzines, to become less insular? The answer I think must lie in the material that is published in these fanzines, in the approaches taken by the writers. Australian fans must, I feel, address themselves to topics more international in scope. At the moment there is a very strong parallel between the current Australian fanzines and the UK fanzine scene in the seventies. In this latter too there was a great degree of insularity, of a concentration upon British views of British topics. Where the parallel breaks down is in the other circumstances of the time. A great deal of this insular fanwriting was being done by exceedingly talented fanwriters of the calibre of Leroy Kettle, Rob Holdstock, Graham and Pat Charnock, Greg Pickersgill, John Brosnan, and later, Kevin Smith and Dave Langford...to name just some of the leading exponents.

Australian fanzines are currently in much the same position, but without the benefit, the saving grace, of having the material produced by such talented writers. There is a boring predictability about most Australian fanzines. When I open one up I know that I will find therein uniquely Australian viewpoints (a good thing in itself) about uniquely Australian concerns. My favourite comment on Australian fanzines, and one made with absolutely no malicious intent, was one made by Cas. The mail had been late that day and I'd had to set off for work before it arrived. When I got there I immediately rang Cas for details of the morning's post...

"Well, the GOOD news is that you got 6 fanzines in the post this morning."

"Great!" I replied, "Er, but what's the BAD news?"

"They're all Australian." she replied.

I mentioned earlier that I thought this issue of SIKANDER was even better edited than Leigh's zines, and I suppose that strictly isn't true. What I meant was that, for me, a purely personal response, it is better edited. This is simply because, like I said earlier, one of an editor's functions is to select the approach and subject matter for his fanzine, and in SIKANDER 8 you have presented well a bunch of stuff of great interest to me, dwelling as it does upon fandom itself. Leigh on the other hand publishes a fanzine which at times seems to have very little to do with fandom, with the exception of his ongoing series of Australian fanzine critiques. Thus it seems to me that, whilst RATAPLAN is head and shoulders above other Aussie fanzines at the moment, it doesn't really have the potential to get much better. It may be higher up above the plains than any other local zine, but the highest peaks are in another range entirely, among the foothills of which the more

promising of the other Oz zines are already assembling - assembling in fact in response to Leigh's own clarion calls.

I particularly liked, to change the subject entirely, Ted's phrase to the effect that good fanwriting "...does not involve any arcane knowledge, nor the ritualistic use of time-worn catch-phrases. (Two hyphenated phrases? That's not too many...)". A delightful use of the very thing which he, quite rightly, says is not required for "good fanwriting", and a particularly neat way to make his point. With good fanwriting, such esoteric references are merely a little bit of icing on a particularly satisfying cake. Without good writing, no amount of fannish shticks can paper over the cracks. However, I wasn't overly impressed with Ted's version of Marc's piece which, if anything, seems to go too far in the opposite direction. I think we should have a competition. Let's all have a go at rewriting that sentence of Marc's. Surely a competition of such Earth-shaking pointlessness is right in the mainstream of fannish tradition. Ted though should be given a second shot at it as he himself admitted that his attempt did not sparkle, and which he probably let stand because it proved his point quite adequately, which was all he was really interested in. OK, here's my entry which I've tried to leave as close to Marc's as I can.

"My nervousness reasserted itself outside the Qantas building, from where the airport bus was to leave...or was it? That's my problem - I'm a worry-wart. I worry all the time. Pointlessly in this instance, as the bus duly arrived and eventually deposited me at the correct terminal." As Ted said, a respect for grammar, but not pedanticism. Alas my command of the English language, such as it is, is strictly intuitive. At school I never could grasp the rules of grammar and to this day recognise only three tenses; Past, Present, and Future. All the more complicated variations are shoals upon which I sometimes founder and through which, at best, I steer an uncharted course. Clauses are mysterious things which I recognise as being stuck inside a set of commas. Commas, you will remember, are those little squiggles that enable you to take a short breath whilst reading. Full-stops of course enable you to take a much bigger breath, and maybe even scratch that annoying itchy bit under your balls. That basically is it. I certainly was never taught to start new paragraphs, within the same quote, after a new pair of quotation marks. I expect to see quotation marks only at the beginning and end of the quote and, just the opposite of Ted's reaction, whenever I see them again at the start of a new paragraph it derails my train of thought. I mean, I thought I was already in a quote. Did I miss the exit, or what?

This intuitive approach does have its problems. Take many of the examples Ted gives. Now I can see that they're clumsy, but I can't tell you why, only that I wouldn't do it that way myself. However, Ted's in depth critique, fully detailed and with many examples, is a fine piece of work and I would hate to be the guy who had to follow it. I am also full of admiration for Ted's integrity in saying it at all, even though I'm sure it'll make him unpopular in some quarters. Also for his

bravery - he is after all coming over to face all these people in person, isn't he, as the Aussiecon Fan GoH?

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I would be hard pressed to disagree with the contents of most of White's statements. My introduction to the fanzine world was via Bangsund's PARERGON PAPERS, Edmonds' RATAPLAN and FANNEW SLETTER, Gillespie's SF COMMENTARY, Ortlieb's MINADOR, Middlemiss's AUTO DELIRIUM and GLASS KEYS, and Lindsay's GEGENSCHWEIN; what White would call, I suppose, the tail end of the better years of fanzine publication in Australia. It was a joyous and heady time.

I assumed then, naively, that these publications would be as constant as the courses of the stars. Imagine my disillusionment as first one, then another, and another, ceased or drastically curtailed production, with no other stars rising in the firmament. Various other groups tried, mainly through apas, to inject a new interest in fanzines into the body of fandom, with dismal results. The fanzines that White talks about are indeed light stuff compared with those I mentioned earlier. Consequently, the thrill of finding a fanzine in the mailbox is gone, although interest, and entertainment occasionally, remain.

I, too, shudder at the mangled grammar and warped syntax, the excruciatingly bad spelling. (I do wonder, though, at your spelling of 'immersed' as "emersed", twice. I would suppose that you were typing directly from White's typed manuscript. If that is White's rendition of the word, I'm surprised; if it's yours, I'm not surprised. Innovative spelling seems to be a hallmark of Australian fanzines.)

Australian writing is often hurried and jumbled - my own suffers this failing in apa contributions, I know. Part of the problem is, I think, that so much fan-writing is put directly to stencil. A first, or, if necessary, second draft would make it so much clearer.

I find it hard to comment on the subject of editing. I'm not an editor, and don't intend to be. But I can see immediately in SIKANDER 8 a gross failure of editing. You realise that SIKANDER 8 is not really SIKANDER 8; it's Ted White's Article on Australian Fanzines! White mentions "A little cross-pollination". Certainly. Why not? But 40-odd pages in a 70 page fanzine? An article of this length deserves breaking into at least two, or possibly three, parts. The article is not only lengthy, but controversial. To have turned it into a series would have been doing both you and White a favour. There would have been more time for readers to digest White's points thoroughly; more feedback on more specific points; and just as importantly, more SIKANDERS, with your personality dominant, instead of submerged to the point of extinction by White's.

Well, I said way back there that I'm hard pressed to disagree with the contents of White's comments. Ah, but the tone. That's something else.

I don't know Ted White. I don't know his fiction, his fanwriting, or most of the foreign fanzines he mentions. I don't know about the feuds or the personality clashes which, despite his protestations, he seems to be involved in. But I can see why he's involved in them.

I've smacked my children occasionally during their growing-up years. I'm not particularly proud of that. But each time, I knew, and the kids knew, that it was because I was angry, spitting angry, and the child in question had deliberately provoked me to that stage. At least we both knew where we stood, and how, and why, and the air was cleared.

But if there's one person I don't trust, it's the parent who coldly and methodically uses corporal punishment, unaroused. The parent who says "This is going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you," who, "more in sorrow than in anger", etc., etc. That parent enjoys the act of causing hurt too much.

And I wonder if Ted White isn't that sort of person. His wistful regret, his rueful sorrow that Australian fanzines aren't what they ought to be, sits awkwardly with the casual cruelty of some of his statements. I get the feeling that, far from begging God to have mercy upon his soul, he'll be overjoyed to receive as many "outraged responses" as possible. What a pity that the unlovely tone of his piece will probably outweigh some good advice.

((Would SIKANDER 8 have been better balanced had it been 100 pages long? Had I decided to do that I would've managed it. Certainly, Ted's article dominated the issue, but there are other points of consideration when suggesting splitting it in two. Ted and I discussed running the article over 2 issues; the main reason we decided against it was that it was written to be read in one go. In the first half Ted left open many points of discussion, only to return to them in his look at Q36 and RATAPLAN. It was there that he tied up the individual threads of the article. Other considerations were that most of the fanzines reviewed were a year old when SIKANDER 8 was published, and that I wasn't sure when I publish issue 9 (given that there was about a year between issues 7 and 8). :: I specifically solicited Ted's article, and find Ted saying a lot of points I've tried to say in my own fanzine reviews. To that degree I think my personality was there. ih))

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SIKANDER 8 is a fine fanzine despite coming from Australia and having dumb cartoons on its cover and back page (with illos like these, no wonder you keep the drawings to a minimum).

Your editorial about fannish hoaxes and awards made interesting reading. I agree with you that most fan awards, particularly the Hugos, don't go to the quality productions, but I'm glad you and Andrew Brown didn't pursue your idea of giving an award to a nonextant fanzine. That would've been like Charles Platt's campaign for a Hugo for Hubbard's

BATTLEFIELD EARTH, strictly an attempt to discredit the Hugos. The Hugos are already discredited by knowledgeable fans, so I don't think that point needs to be made.

As to giving such an award to a hoax fan or fanzine, and particularly to your idea that Carl Brandon would have won a Hugo as Best Fan Writer in 1958, I have to disagree. "Carl" was indeed very popular in them thar days and I believe you're right in thinking he would have been nominated if such an award had existed then, but I'm dead sure he wouldn't have won even at the height of his popularity. Carl would have been up against Walt Willis, Bob Bloch, Dean Grennell, John (UK) Berry, and other excellent fanwriters of the time; he wouldn't have won. In actuality, Willis would have won the award, just as he did in fact win the award in 1958 as Best Fan Personality.

Ted White's magnum opus is of course the highlight of the issue (it would be a bummer if it weren't, considering it occupies about 2/3 of your pages), but David Grigg's piece was quite interesting too. I really suspect that a good writer can make a worthwhile article out of any job he or she has ever had, and it needn't even be such a peculiar one as Grigg's. I remember a couple of years ago when Charles Sheffield said in THRUST that a salable sf story could be written about absolutely any job no matter how boring the job; he accepted a challenge to write and sell a story about the dullest job any of the readers could suggest, and was assigned the subject of night janitor. The story he produced wasn't a great one, but he sold it to RIGEL. ...Fanwriters telling about their jobs have the opportunity to tell anecdotes, describe Characters, and all that, and Grigg did a good job here. I hope David will one day soon write about his job with a public relations consultancy, too, as he says he may.

I gather that Ted's article has caused a bit of anger from various Australian fans, and I'm not surprised: Ted tells the truth about how Ozzines are regarded in other climes, and explains the shortcomings of most Oz fanzines with admirable candor. He also details how fanzines from Australia or anywhere could and should be improved, and to my mind he's right on every point. I hope that, once Oz fans get over being outraged, they'll consider Ted's points seriously and follow at least some of his recommendations; Ted is, after all, simply writing truth in a constructive way... and he knows what he's writing about, so I think people ought to pay attention to him. I think he's correct in every criticism and that his recommendations for improvement and how to go about it are dead right too.

Despite my overall agreement with Ted, I do have a few criticisms of his article, mainly having to do with his use of the language. How unfortunate it is that Ted should have written, "(Good fanwriting) requires a respect for grammer (but not pedanticism)..." Maybe the misspelling of "grammar" was the typist's fault rather than Ted's, but that word "pedanticism" is totally wrong even after correcting for the typo: the word Ted wanted there was "pedantry"; there's no such word as

"pedanticism". Ted is unfortunately prone to making mistakes like this; checking just that page of his article, I find him writing "derivitives" when he means "derivatives", "emersed" when he means "immersed", and using only a three-dot ellipsis where he needs four. On another page I couldn't help wincing at his line, "If I was he I would..." He meant "If I were him..." Grammer, Ted, grammer. And of course there's the place where Ted takes Marc Ortlieb to task for using the word "woken", which Ted claims doesn't exist. Oh yes it does; my dictionary lists it as a "British usage", which presumably includes Australian usage, so Ortlieb was within his rights. I really think it behooves anyone who criticizes the language usage of others to check the dictionary first; not only can you avoid sounding dumb that way, but you can learn a lot about the language, including many things (derivations, etc.) that are interesting in themselves.

Speaking of which, I just belatedly took my own advice and looked up "pedanticism" in my Random House Dictionary. O horrors! - I find that it is a real word after all, and it means just what Ted thinks it means; so he was right and I was wrong above and I must recant and apologize. (Shit. But goodonyer, Ted.) That dictionary actually gives four alternatives for this word: pedantry, pedanticism, pedanthood, and pedantism, apparently in that order of preference. See what I mean about finding interesting things in dictionaries? - I'd never heard the latter two constructions of the word. In any case, I've just hoisted myself by my own petard and am properly rueful. Oh well; nobody's perfect. I once caught even Bob Silverberg in a language mistake, and just two days ago when I was in LA having dinner with Harlan Ellison and we'd hardly finished having fun mutually denouncing people who misuse the language I had to correct his pronunciation of some word.

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Until recently I would have agreed with most of your conclusions on awards, but then I was one of the counters for this year's Nova Award, and that has changed my mind somewhat, in particular about the relevance of votes cast by people who don't really know too much about the field. We could see whilst counting the votes that a few people were on their hobby-horses, in particular someone who voted for obscure comics fanzines and people. But the overall trend was obvious, and these odd-balls did not sway the vote at all. Many people decry the Nova Award because a lot of lobbying goes on amongst certain groups, but even that doesn't necessarily do the award any harm; after all, people might be approached with "come on, let's make it Dave Bridges this time", but if they have any feelings to the contrary why take any notice in a secret ballot? The final result will still reflect the general consensus. The Hugos, now, are another kettle of fish completely, since there are hordes of ignorant people who vote there and outnumber those 'in the know', but we're talking about smaller fannish awards.

Then you mention that the absence of an award should not affect the fanac, and in fact if everyone who voted wrote letters instead fanac

might be increased. Yes, you have a point to an extent, but there is also the other side of the coin. When a certain number of issues must be published to qualify for an award, this can be a spur to get that issue out that you've been planning for so long. Lethargy is very difficult to overcome, as I know to my cost with a year between issues of WALLBANGER this time round. I'm not saying that all editors publish just to be eligible for an award, but this could be that little extra spur, the final factor tipping the balance just like a convention.

Obviously, if everyone who voted locced instead this would be an immense spur, but there are two factors here - firstly even though an issue can be very enjoyable it need not provide food for comment and the "I liked it a lot" type loc is not as inspiring as the more detailed ones. Also an immense response can be so overwhelming it delays the next publication which the editor might feel is going to be either so long it needs more time, or must be of a sufficiently high quality to deserve all this worthy comment, that it will be delayed until 'good stuff' can be produced. And what about the responsibility receiving an award brings with it. That could be an equally important prod to continued pubbing, since you've not only got to live up to the esteem of your peers, but also thank them for their loyalty, etc.

About Christine Ashby's article: there was a very good episode of QUINCY shown on tv a couple of months back. It concerned a guy who was being tried on a drunken driving charge when he had killed another man. In the end it transpired that the drunkenness was a fake, the 'baddie' had intended to murder his victim and made it look like drunken driving because the penalty was minimal compared to a murder charge. Makes you think, doesn't it! I feel quite strongly about this subject because my father suffered severe brain damage from an accident in 1974. The guy who caused the accident most probably had a scare, he also received a £20 fine and an endorsement on his licence, but I wonder if he even remembers the incident now. Surely if he were made to realize the true consequences of his action in all its ramifications (including the untimely death of my mother recently, the effect on my family life of having a father who not only has the physical disability, but can often turn into a 9 year old child having a tantrum) it would make him take more care in his driving. A complete ban wouldn't really be the answer, but some sort of service could be better (let's say he had to come and look after my father each time we wanted to go away for the weekend) Wouldn't that be more beneficial?

I'm afraid Ted just gets my hair standing on edge even though I agree with most of what he says, it's the way he says it. He often complains of people misinterpreting what he meant, but as possibly the most adept wordsmith around (after all, he earns his living at it as he incessantly tells us all) he should be the last to complain of misinterpretation - the fault surely lies in his writing. Anyway, enough of that. What rankles with me is that although the type of fanzine Ted is extolling is exactly that which I like best, I wouldn't dream of concluding that 'good' fanzines are of that type. I hope I am modest enough to realize

there is no reason why my personal taste has anything to do with Quality. He seems to imply that if the zine is not to his taste it is bad - take for example his views in PONG on fanzine production which came out in favour of the duplicated, quarto on coloured paper format. Yes, I like that, but I can appreciate that the 'feel' of that type of fanzine might just possibly not be what the editor wanted. And the cosy feel of the late 60's early 70's is just one example of a whole range. Perhaps Ted's main problem with his overview of Australian fanzines is that he (like me) is an outsider - and no product is going to be successful for those not in the market it was aimed at.

That doesn't mean I think Australian fanzines are great and this is why Ted gets me so annoyed. In fact I quite agree with him that they seem, on the whole, turgid and quite at contrast with the letters I receive from those Australians I have contact with. But not being in Australian fandom I feel at a disadvantage and some of the failure of the zines should be attributed to that.

Getting on to specifics, and his treatment of Jean Weber's fanzines. After all, what is wrong with having no awareness of accumulated thought of an established community when aiming to prompt people into describing their feelings, which are individual and constantly changing? I think you learn more about a person this way, which is what I like about fanzines, and to be perfectly honest it doesn't matter too much if they are retreading ground already covered by others. I prefer to see a whole personality, not just the fannish side. I don't see how "it can be pretty well established..." when dealing with different generations in different societies (by that I mean the same country, but society is changing over time, so in effect you get a different society). People change. Ted doesn't seem to consider that some of those involved in the discussions he decries might be newly discovering these areas, but even if not, a continuing problem surely requires a continuing debate. That's why in the UK we periodically Review whether or not to bring back hanging, whether to join/leave the EEC, whether to abolish the House of Lords. I would hate to live in a society which says "right, that's been discussed and decided on, let's get on and never review that again". Similarly there's a certain amount of pomposity in that just because Ted knows that anal rape is still rape in the eyes of the law, doesn't mean we are all that well-informed (I for one hadn't even thought of that type of rape). OK, Jean should have pointed out the error, but I don't think her omission was that serious given her intentions with WREVENGE. As far as I can tell, she's not aiming to persuade or convince anyone of anything, nor is she trying to purvey statistical data, more the aim is to get people talking about areas where really our emotions tend to take over rather than cool logic. In that case correct factual bases are not as important as on other occasions - how often do facts actually change our feelings, our logic may be, but it takes a lot more than that to get right down to our core.

Again, "broad mental horizons" - we're not a super-race just because we read sf, we're just ordinary individuals complete with our own

idiosyncracies, hypocracies and closed minds. We do fit mundane gender-stereotypes since there are as many enlightened humanists etc and as many unenlightened closed-minded bigots as there are in any social grouping.

If the general consensus in Australian fandom is that you want to produce good quality international zines, then it will come of its own accord, in my view. I don't think an article like Ted's will really do any good, since far too often the automatic reaction is to justify oneself when faced with such an overpoweringly negative overview. The move, the desire, has got to come from inside, though. I look forward to reading the response of you Australians to Ted's views, and whether I'm proved wrong. I'd like to see some more life (by which I mean humorous anecdotal material) in the zines I receive, but I'm just as willing to attempt to like the more serious side if that's what 'Australian' really means. Life would be so dull if we all produced exactly the same style fanzines all over the world, wouldn't it?

((You forgot to include one other factor on what is good about awards: they provide egoboo for those who are nominated and/or win. I would've thought that is as important feature as those you mention, and is always in the back of my mind on those occasions when I do vote. I'm all for using every avenue to give out egoboo. :: I would've thought that if Aussie editors send their fanzines overseas they are aiming for an international market, and they should try to entertain those individuals. I receive many fanzines from overseas that I enjoy more than nearly all Australian fanzines. A fair amount of these fanzines, particularly the British, have references to people and events I am not aware of but that doesn't stop my enjoyment of them. ih))

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SIKANDER 8 was fascinating reading: Ted White's article was an absorbing, thoughtful, and - I thought - quite even-handed critique of Australian fanzines. It would be interesting to hear from some of the Australian fannish

"old guard" for their opinions on Ted's statements and also to hear their ideas on the reasons for and evaluations of the newer generation's editorial styles. But I quite admire Ted for his careful and honest view of Aussie fanzines, especially considering the fact that it would have been a lot easier for him to refuse your offer to do the article and not had to worry about hostile receptions when he's there in two years for his GoH stint. I agree with him on his assessment of Australian fanzines, differing only on a few minor points.

One of the quibbles I had concerned his view of Jean Weber's WEBER WOMAN'S WREVENGE. Though I agree with him about WWW's apa-ish quality and Jean's often un-informed point-of-view, I don't agree with him that WWW's subject matter is irrelevant to fandom. Ted asserts that "the majority of male fans are sensitive and empathic", an assumption not shared by all women fans (though we may object less to his typoed

assertion that most male fans are "emphatic"). This basic difference of opinion between Ted and some women fans about the varied consciousness of fannish and mundane males may account for a few arguments in recent years that seemed to hinge on disparate definitions of terms.

That notable male fannish sensitivity has always seemed to me to stem from painful shyness rather than any emphatic awareness of feminine sensibility. Once accepted by a woman, the male fan can don the full sexist wardrobe, becoming a possessive, demanding, and authoritative twit, as quickly as any mundane man. There's a difference between sensitivity born of understanding and that sparked by fear. The latter kind does not contribute much toward a fannish feminist utopia.

Granted that Ted has often asserted that he's not too interested by the topic of feminism (in fanzines). That's OK: I've tended to skim his articles on jazz. That's not one of my favoutite topics. I wouldn't try to tell him that jazz can't be fannish though: to me and probably to Jean Weber, an awareness of sexual roles impinges upon everything I do, including fandom. Whether or not we are able to write about our favourite topics - be they feminism or jazz - in a fannish style is another question. I happen to think Avedon Carol and Lucy Huntzinger did it with panache and style in RUDE BITCHES, and the fact that Ted didn't seem too thrilled about that example of feminist fannish writing either, I think, says more about his dislike for the subject matter than the execution. It's a criticism that Jean Weber doesn't deserve here.

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A young man I know, perhaps more politically minded than you, I don't know, has a more constructive way of doing things. He picks up a flyer from whatever political group he has most spare flyers from, and sticks that in the free return envelope instead. I've been tempted to do that, but the only political

flyers I have in the house at the moment are of the British Union of Anti-Vivisectionists, which are rather nausteating, and I hesitate to upset the innocent letter opener at the other end. I can remember, I think, when conventions used to promise that they wouldn't sell your address to any mailorder firm.

Like the Wood quote, I assume the mention of the Verbal equinox was what we've started to call 'constructive typos' over here - where you make a typo which states the point or a side-point clearer than what you were saying. Examples: "how can you bare to strip off in public", "I hat simmer", and "malign comments" (instead of mailing comments).

Christine's article was very interesting. I understand Eric's attitude - not having to do something often makes you feel less negative about doing it. My little sister often used to come down here and voluntarily do bits of housework, because she didn't have to, whereas at my parents house they assume that she should do everything. If you do a virtuous act freely, you are giving something. If you do it because you're paid

to, or threatened to, then it's not a gift but an exchange, which makes it less worthy.

If Ted White believes fiction has no place in fanzines, is it reasonable to assume he has never printed any in any of his fanzines? If so, how is he to know that "The king of feedback aspiring authors...get from... letterwriters...is totally unsuitable". After all, not all of every loc is printed in the loccol. We print small amounts of fiction in our fanzine. We've printed only one story so far, and 3 poems, admittedly, and the short story was a 'mood piece', but we've had a little feedback, all of which has been passed on to the writer/poet. It's likely that we'll never get much feedback from poetry, as so many people are afraid of it, but we hope the feedback will improve in time. Part of the problem, perhaps, is what people are used to. When you start writing locs, there are certain things that appear a lot, and which you get used to making comments about. Other things are more rare, such as fiction and poetry, and it's difficult to know what to say. Unless, of course, you're a wholehearted anti-fiction type like White, in which case you will either call the fiction "rubbish" automatically, or perhaps (if you don't feel obliged to do a proper review) disregard the whole fanzine because of the odd story in it (this is what happened to my first fanzine, UNISON, several years ago).

I have no liking for Alderson's beliefs, but feel While is picking on minor points misinterpreted. "Many years ago..." quote reads more to me like an attempt to make the beginning more 'ceremonial'. Whether or not this is a good idea, I don't know. Similarly, while Alderson might have been wrong to use "writers" as a synonym for "authors" it's often done, and authors and poets are often separate things. If you are using "writers" to mean "authors", the poets should be mentioned separately, lest the reader assume all the writers are prose writers.

Rather pathetic comments about the art in WWW. White seems to believe there is good fanart, the best of which are Rotsler's simple line drawings, and bad fanart, some of which is "girlish". Strange how things in the real world reflect things in fandom, and vice versa. Feminists in the real world have realised for a long time that men are generally seen as being better artists. This is because other men with similar tastes set the standards. Looks as if it's the same in fandom. Because artistic girls draw these cute things, they must be inappropriate things for an adult artist, who presumably by now should have learned to draw more masculine things. In fandom, there is the additional question of how well known someone is. Which is presumably how a cartoonist such as Rotsler comes to be regarded as a good fanartist - because he has been seen as such for a long time. What would you suggest Weber uses to illustrate her fanzine? Images of rape? Her male readership wouldn't be interested in such things, though undoubtedly such illos would have raised Whites opinion of the publication. Which is more contradictory: cute illos and articles about rape and suchlike, or illos of spaceships and seminude females against the average fanarticle? A fillo is a fillo, surely.

Must be nice for White to have the motivations of rapists established now, unfortunately many women (and men) are unaware of these motivations. Actually, if these motivations were "pretty well established", we wouldn't have all these reports of rape which go something like "attractive blonde divorcee, age 26, was hitchhiking home...", which serve to show people that attractive females get it, and if they don't stay home, they deserve it. Questions such as the motivation of rapists are things that have to be reiterated for each new group of people to become feminists, in fact, to draw a comparison, these older feminists are doing what White believes older fanzine fans should do for the newcomers.

As for the question of anal rape, I am at a disadvantage here, knowing the legal systems of neither the USA or Australia. But assuming them to be similar to the British system (after all, the 3 systems were affected by the same religion), I should point out that there are 2 meanings of rape. One is a legal term, meaning penetration of the vagina or labia by the penis, irrespective of the womans consent. The other is a more general expression, used as shock value or as a shortform, meaning any object forced into any orifice against the persons will (and including, sometimes, the idea of female 'rape' ie refusing to let a man go unless he's performed a certain act). In the legal sense of the term anal rape is not rape, because anal sex performed on a woman is illegal whether she wanted it or not. If a woman reports a vaginal rape, she faces a court ordeal in which the defence tries to prove that she asked for it, or that she is easy, and doesn't deserve the laws protection. If she reports anal rape, as soon as the medical evidence is in, then it's a crime. Buggery is considered such an important crime that it is the only crime in which a woman can give evidence against her husband. But if it had been my fanzine, I would have reassured the victim that decent people would consider that she was raped. Why should a man need empathy to consider the subject any more than an un-raped woman would? Any person who has any idea of basic human dignity should find the idea of rape abhorrent.

How would White know whether the belief that societies run by different genders have different qualities is false? When was he fortunate enough to live in a matriarchy? We know that women brought up in a society where a woman can only succeed by making herself as bad as men have masculine qualities, but there is no evidence that this would be so under a different system.

Really, someone as sexist as White has no place ranting about sexism. In a recent article in MICROWAVE he made it clear that women are stupid if they listen to a scientific opinion other than his, and that this particular woman is stupid anyway, because of her particular form of attractiveness. In a recent rant in IZZARD, he thinks it's justifiable to judge a womans opinions by her mans fanzine title. This is particularly silly as the man in question (to the best of my knowledge) hasn't produced a copy of this fanzine since she moved in with him.

It would be interesting to hear how he knows male fans are sensitive and empathic. Oh, I'm sure this is how they behave towards him, but we are talking about sexism, and any man with the slightest pretence to sexism must realise that men treat men differently to women. Not just in the obvious way, but in respect to estimations of intelligence, width of vocabulary, and limitations of subject matter. And of course, to different kinds of women - most men are happy to condescend to quiet or traditional women, but get aggressive at assertive women. But then, White himself does this later in the article, so let's leave that till then. I would hope that no female fans (and hopefully, few male fans) are aggressive. They should, however be assertive. Assertiveness is standing up for your rights. Aggressiveness is trying to browbeat someone else out of theirs.

I prefer fanzines as a reflection of the editors personality, which is probably my main area of disagreement with White. Particularly foreign fanzines. As I never, or hardly ever, get to see any foreign fanzines, I want to get to know them through their zines. Weber and Hlavaty are people who are most themselves in their zines. So I enjoy these more than the carefully polished personality zines White seems to prefer.

I see that White defines 'fringe fans' as people who disagree with him, and plays the usual sexist trick of calling a woman 'Ms', thus implying that she's only a woman, and a rabid feminist at that, and therefore should be ignored. If you call a woman 'Ms' in an article, you should be careful to give social titles to everyone else mentioned. This is just typical trivialisation. When I first read this bit, I didn't believe even someone like White could be this obvious and expect people not to notice.

((I'm pleased with your paragraph on anal rape - I thought there was something wrong with Ted's comments but couldn't put my finger on what it was. I'm also in agreement with you (and Jeanne and Eve) on his comments on male fans being sensitive and empathic. I don't like generalisations at the best of times, and this one because I agree with Jeanne on where such an impression would come from. I also go along with you on Ted trying to associate Judith Hanna to NAPALM IN THE MORNING as he did, and in calling the woman described in the MICROWAVE article as stupid because of her attractiveness. But I don't think it sexist for Ted to regard the woman as stupid for not listening to him. He was describing a particular situation and woman, whose instability may have been the cause for his daughter coming home from school upset and had her daughter "real scared" for a night. :: Ted may have published fiction in his fanzines and maybe it was on reflection that he decided fiction has no place in fanzines. After all, it was Ted who noted that no many of the people who continually had their fiction published in fanzines 'graduated' to selling their fiction. On the other hand, I understand the list of fans who have sold their fiction is largely dominated by those who didn't publish their fiction in fanzines. :: I don't believe Ted defines 'fringe

fans' as people who disagree with him but as those who are on the fringe of 'our' fanzine fandom. Julie Vaux is, I understand, on the fringe of 'our' fandom. I could be wrong but I don't think she approaches fanzines in the same way than that of anyone else on my mailing list (my personal friends excepted). She isn't one of us; she is different. I think Ted used the 'Ms' in part to point out that difference, and in part as a reaction to the earnest tone of her letter. :: Who is the other part of the "we"? And what is the fanzine you publish? ih))

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I thought Ted White's fanzine reviews were most interesting and fairly done, even though I did didn't agree with a lot of his opinions.

Certainly few Australian fanzines measure up to the many good ones overseas, but some of the points he is negative about are deliberate choices on the editor's part and not just inability. So our choices may not meet his criteria; fair enough.

I must disappoint Christine Ashby by not disagreeing with her points on free will; indeed, I've often said much the same to those of my friends who feel they "have to" do something like visit a relative or have a church wedding when they don't want to. But I would like to go back to her opening paragraphs (which she uses to leap into a different topic for the essay - a nice trick). I have been trying to think of something - anything - which I would classify as "inherently virtuous", but I can't. Almost any action which might qualify, could also be a negative one under certain circumstances. Perhaps Christine would like to enlighten me on this topic.

In similar circumstances to those described (Eric & the sandwich), I'd probably also say "because I don't have to", but what I'd really mean is "because it's not expected of me". I enjoy doing nice things for people when it's not expected - especially when the receiver doesn't give me to feel that if I didn't do the nice thing, he or she would be terrible disappointed, offended, or whatever. That reaction is, of course, the other person's problem, but if I know that's what's been directed at me, I consider it a form of emotional coercion and respond by saying (not out loud, usually; but by my actions), "I don't have to". If I know the other person won't be particularly upset if I don't do something nice, then I will do it and gladly.

I liked this issue best of all yours I've seen, Irwin.

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Alas, I fail to see why Christine has so much trouble with certain minor concepts relating to property and theft. I have been known to attempt to assist people. If I do, it is my own decisions, and not a matter of being

forced to do so. However let us assume that I had been "forced" to make

Christine the cheese sandwich by which she introduces her article. Who would force me? Christine, or some other fam? Very unlikely. Some group attempting to assist wandering fans? Again, unlikely. Society? Well, yes, in some sense. Society saying that we must all care for everyone else. Now if I were to be forced to provide a cheese sandwich there are two situations. One is that someone (presumably by force or by threat) makes me provide a sandwich (in which case I would obviously do it as quick and cheap as I could). The other is that society tax me and pay someone else to do so, in which case energy and effort is expended in gathering money from an unwilling person. Either way, the result is far more waste than if I happen to produce a cheese sandwich of my own free will. The "now look what you made me do" excuse just won't wash. We are all responsible for our actions, however we also have a responsibility to ourselves. To avoid fitting in with society to certain minimal extent will inevitably produce a situation in which society will force you to do things, or prevent you from doing things. For example, if you do not fill in a tax return, you eventually get visited by large gentlemen who will eventually cart you off to jail. Thus you can be threatened, even if you can't be forced. In my view, a society that has to respect to force simply does not deserve any respect whatsoever, and is fair game for any attempt to defeat, beat, cheat, and destroy it. That I am not more strenuous in my efforts is not a matter of liking this society, but rather of recognising that most other societies are far worse, and that they would be likely to occur if this one were destroyed (as of course it should be if it attempts to use force or threats to achieve its aims).

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While it is true that no-one can be compelled to do anything (a point Eric Frank Russell makes most effectively in one of the stories in THE GREAT EXPLOSION) except suffer the consequences of someone else's action. If I put a knife in Christine's heart I will quite effectively have compelled her to be dead, so that "you made me do it" is not an adequate defence. Christine doesn't really adequately address the problem of responsibility for an action versus responsibility of an action, but goes on to consider extreme positions relating to duress and mitigation. To give a reductio ad absurdum example, I can responsibility for planting that knife in Christine's heart, but refuse to take responsibility for her taking the action of dying. Would anybody regard this as a valid defence? of course not. However, I will now use an example Sally Beasley once used to me: if she knows that person will be upset if she yells at them, but goes ahead and does it anyway, it is meaningless for her to take responsibility for her action, but not for its consequences, since she expected those consequences from that action. This would be more so if her intention was to obtain that reaction from the other person. To disdain responsibility for the consequences of an action when the consequences were expected by the person committing the action is an attempt to evade full responsibility for that action, or so I and Sally would contend.

Ted White makes his points so carefully that one cannot really refute most of them. In fact, I have written direct to him making comments which didn't really need to be made to you, or which would be too lengthy to print.

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I am certainly flattered that Ted sees fit to go to such great lengths to try and improve the quality of Australian fanzines. It's something that he has obviously given a great deal of thought to, and I am rather flattered that he considers my fanzine, and my writing, to be deserving of so much attention. If I were to get a job tutoring writing - unlikely I know - I certainly would charge a lot more than Ted does. Let me also add, before I start disagreeing with Ted, that he makes some very good points.

For starters, I know that my writing isn't up to the standard of Bangsund, Foyster or Edmonds. I know my limitations. I write to entertain. I tend to prefer silly to biting. Ted is certainly right when he points out the lack of conversation in my writing. That's something I'm still trying to come to grips with, and so, rather than produce a lame version of something which I vaguely recall Bob Shaw having said at B'Hamacon, I tend to gloss over that. If one is going to use conversation, then one should do it well. Hopefully I will develop that skill in time.

I will also grant that the trip report could have been more detailed in places. Mind you, I raise in my own defence the fact that it did get published. I have heard rumours of all sort of trip reports that evidently run to huge word counts, and which, no doubt, include the sort of detail that Ted would like to see, but I've yet to see one of them. If I'd tried to put in all the detail that Ted requires, then I'd never have put the report out. In anticipation of the reply that one shouldn't put out a flawed work, I can only say in my defence that a lot of people have written explaining how much they enjoyed the report. While I can't say that that justifies the faults, I feel that it must count for something.

I grant that my syntax does become a touch convoluted at times, and the examples Ted quotes are ones of which I am suitably ashamed. I don't however agree with Ted's assertion that I should have expanded my description of the nervousness at the bus station into the huge paragraph that he suggests. True, it was a touch vague, and I should, perhaps, have given a little more information, but it wasn't so important that it needed to be dwelt on in detail. It was merely put there to show my nervousness. That perhaps is why I erred on the side of brevity. I really didn't wish to make a big thing of it.

It seems to me that Ted White doesn't like Australian fanzines because they don't fit the pattern that he feels a fanzine ought to fit. Nowhere is this more obvious than when he complains about the use of A4

paper. He is looking for fanzines to be all like the sort of zines that he obviously enjoys, and while there is nothing wrong in this, it does mean that his particular prejudices have to be taken into account before looking for the useful comments in his reviews. I'm afraid that I'm not going to attempt to make Q36 look, or read, anything like WARHOON or TAPPEN. While I admire those zines, and enjoy reading them, I know that they do not suit my personality. I like flippancy.

Ted seems to think that he has sealed my fate by saying that I don't even come up to the standard of HOLIER THAN THOU. While I agree with his evaluation of the relative merits of the two zines - though I think Q36 looks nicer than HHT - I do feel that this points to our basic disagreement. I like HHT, and were Q36 to reach its standards I'd be quite content. It comes down to the style of fanzine that one appreciates, and with all due respect to WARHOON and TAPPEN, much as I enjoy a lot of what appears in them, there is much that I don't feel inspired to read. D. West's huge article, for instance, I got partway through. It had the same effect on me as did DHALGREN - ie too long, and too complicated. I read fanzines for fun, and not for deep philosophy, or Meaning. I guess I'm just a pleb, and am likely to remain that way.

The other thing, of course, is that fanzines reflect regional differences, and a fanzine can appeal to a regional audience while not coming over well to an audience from a different region. Here in Australia we have a different group of fans to that which was active in what Ted considers to be the Golden Age of Australian fanzines. Of the publishing giants of that time, only Leigh Edmonds is really active in fanzine production, and Australian fans have developed in different ways since then. True, this may be a falling off from the "Good Old Days" however, complaining about that doesn't really do anything useful. It does seem to me that what Ted wants is for Australian fandom in its current form to revert to the Aussie fandom that used to be. However, it doesn't work that way.

Q36 is a fanzine that gets published the way it is because that's the way I want it to be, and because the people I am closest to seem to like it. So much of the question of what makes a good fanzine and what doesn't comes down to taste, as shown by Ted's opinions on John Packer's cartoons. He doesn't think they are funny, so he writes them off. Other people do find them funny, and so are willing to excuse the fact that John is not a technically good artist.

It is interesting to note that, although Ted states that he does not want to set a single standard for all fanzines, his approach in this review/article clearly implies that he has a particular stereotype of the ideal fanzine in mind every time he reviews a zine, and that zines are measured by how close they get to this stereotype. That's all well and good, but I feel that it is a rather limited view of fanzines. While I can agree that the fanzines Ted lists as good are good, I also enjoy a lot of the fanzines that he pans. Thus, while Ted may be

pleased that he only enjoys "good" fanzines, I figure that I get far more enjoyment out of reading the things, as I have a lower critical threshold.

I can't say that I am in total agreement with Ted's idea that all Australian fanzines need to do in order to improve is to commission articles from overseas and older Australian fanwriters. As mentioned above, while I respect the material I've seen in such fanzines as WARHOON, RATAPLAN, and TAPPEN, I realise that such material would be out of place in Q36 as I see the zine. To me, the integrity of feel of a fanzine is more important than the quality of the individual articles, which is why I continue to use John Packer artwork for my covers. Q36 is not going to become a pretentious fanzine. It's the sort of fanzine where you can take off your slippers, and pick your nose in the lounge, rather than the sophisticated dinner party-type zine that Ted prefers. It's the sort of zine, I hope, that encourages people to write. True, it does tend to discourage media fen, but then, it has its own rationale, which doesn't fit in with the media fan's way of doing things. I'm basically not interested in film or tv sf, other than to watch when I want to relax my mind.

So, as I mentioned earlier, while I am grateful to Ted for pointing out a few things in my writing and editing, I can't see myself changing Q36 all that much to accomodate him. Q36 will change certainly, especially as it's going into recess over 1984, however, it will evolve, as my skills evolve, rather than changing instantly into a WARHOON clone. As Ted himself pointed out, Q36 is a reflection of my own personality, and it may be expected to change as much, or as little as that changes.

((I agree with Ted on asking for more detail in your trip report, but I also would've asked for it to have been more selective in the choice of events and place reported. Like Ted I didn't find the report to be engrossing reading; I got the impression that you felt you had to write about the trip but weren't sure on how. So what we got was often a list of places and events, without much impression of what you felt about it all. :: I don't think Ted wants all fanzines to be like those he likes, at least not in the way you mean. He doesn't want a WARHOON clone, or a RATAPLAN clone, or a TAPPEN clone. Rather, I think he wants all fanzines to have a feature common to these 3 fanzines: that they are well-edited, well-written, and express the personality of the editors and contributors. :: In this way you should realise, in relation to Q36, that there is a difference between putting out a fanzine which is flippant, and editing for that flippancy. I don't know why you don't commission specific articles, but I can explain why I do. In part it is because it restricts the chance factor of getting suitable material. But also, the topics covered are of interest to me. Over the past year I've been thinking of the topic first, and then writing to the appropriate person soliciting the article. I agree that some of the names on that list of Possible

Q36 Contributors are not appropriate to your fanzine, but Ted did say that you'd be "a lot more aware of (other) local fanwriters" than he. But it is not the list of names that is important, I think, but that you take more control of what goes into your fanzine. Q36 does have a positive personality, but I feel that it comes out in spite of the way the fanzine is put together. And I can't help but wonder about just how the response will repay the extra effort involved.- which I find is about one-tenth the effort of duplicating or collating a fanzine. ih))

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I would venture to guess that quite a few people's feathers are now ruffled by "Lost in Oz", but each dispute will eventually boil down to the equivalent of the "gentlemens' disagreement" between Ted and Marc Ortlieb.

They differ primarily in their respective definitions of what a fanzine does, what it is, and what it should be. Ideally, a zine should please its readers as much as it pleases its editor, but Ted's reaction to these zines is so subjective that he fails to address the question of whether or not it is obvious that the faneds are pleased with their efforts, or whether they acknowledge that their productions may not be all they want them to be. Although PARIAS showed some slight, if not remarkable, improvement between #3 and #4, Gerald spends a portion of his editorial ramblings bemoaning his zine's shortcomings and thanking his critics for being so hard on him. He obviously appreciates their honesty and actively solicits their opinions, no matter how unflattering. Granted, an editorial should not be made up of excuses for why an issue is late/slim/illegible/uninteresting, but Gerald displays such an appealing desire to improve that I look forward to seeing what he does with his zine utilizing the knowledge he's gained from past mistakes.

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I will, without embarrassment, admit that my first reaction to Ted White's epic on Australian fanzines was exactly what he dreaded most: "A hostile, defensive reaction," which became more so as I realised the sheer length

of the thing, and that I wasn't going to be able to finish reading it in the time I had available that evening. I threw it aside in disgust, slept badly, took out my bad feelings on my quivering subordinates at work all day, and finally came home exhausted, belted down a couple of stiff drinks, and sat down to find out what else that 'Goddamned Yank' had to bitch about in regard to OUR zines. I started back at page 1, determined to digest the entire article in one fell swoop, and suddenly discovered that Ted was actually making sense, and that I was tending to agree with some of the points he was making. I am only relatively new to fandom, and no way will I profess to knowing all about the glorious fanzines of yesteryear, or in fact all those which Ted reviews, but I do receive most of them, so I feel I can safely comment on behalf of myself and Aussiefandom.

Ted's criticisms can be neatly divided into two bundles: Production and Contents, and his comments on the first category I found very close to the mark. If some time in the future I decide to produce a fanzine of my own, a not unlikely possibility, I will use Ted's article as a base on which to form my own policies, provided, (and this is where some of his criticisms fall down), the demands of quality etc fall into line with the budget of the zine. The old arguments about mimeo vs offset vs photocopying ad nauseum are immaterial if they mean a potentially good fanzine doesn't get off the ground because the humble editor can't come up with the necessary cash to produce a 'quality' product inasmuch as it is merely pleasing to the eye. As long as the damn thing is clearly legible, (and I recently received one that wasn't!) then it deserves to be accepted on the quality of its content, regardless of whether it was printed four colour photo offset or on the Church Social Club hand gestetner. The thing I like most about fanzine fandom is the amount of pure individuality expressed by its very existence, and to condemn some part of it simply because it doesn't come up to some hypothetical standard would be a terrible shame.

On the contents side of the issue, I also found myself agreeing with his remarks on editorial standards. I have recently taken a long, hard look at my own efforts, and decided to improve the quality of thought behind them as much as my poor brain will allow. This followed a rejection by Leigh Edmonds of a below standard article, but I learnt from the advice I was given, and I only hope it is reflected in my fanac! Ted's criticisms of the personalities behind the zines however, I found most aggravating. His attack, (and I can think of no more suitable word) on Jean Weber for her "mundane" background and attitudes I found horrifying. Jean is a most active fan and a dedicated faned. Certainly, she uses the medium to express her own opinions on life, but that is what gives her zine 'personality' and just because she doesn't live in a private sf dreamworld is no reason to knock her. If I am reading Ted's opinions properly, then I will never qualify as suitable faned material in his eyes because I don't have a photograph of myself at age one, thumb in mouth and well-read 1949 copy of ASTOUNDING in the other grubby paw!

I cannot help but attempt to do as Ted has done, and attempt to draw a mental picture of the person purely on his writing, in what I can only describe as 'Pure Alderson' style. My own sense of the ridiculous would love to present him as a hunchbacked old man, sitting in a dingy attic stacked to the ceiling with rapidly fading fanzines of years gone by, writing vitriolic letters with a vulture quill pen under the guttering light of a corpse-fat candle.... I will however be honest and say that I haven't a clue what the man may look like, but I KNOW he'd be a hard man to please with anything literary. I honestly believe Ted has put a lot of thought into his article, and has attempted to be fair in his appraisals of our zines. I do believe however, that he hasn't succeeded in totally eliminating his bias about Aussie fanzines, and he tends to fall back on trivial nitpicking rather than say something positive about

a zine that didn't appeal to him right from the beginning. I don't have the 'honour' of being on the mailing lists of any of the US zines he holds up as being closest to the American Dream, but I have seen copies of MAINSTREAM and QUINAPALUS, both of which are streets ahead of us in production, but both of which also seem to me to suffer far more from the lack of 'feeling' he complains of so bitterly in his comments on WAHF-FULL than any of our zines.

((I think you misunderstand Ted's use of the word "mundane". He was using it in reference to her own writing, in which she tends to keep a personal distance from the subject matter. Other people - Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas come to mind - have also noted this, and I agree with them. I don't know why Jean doesn't do something about this, as I suspect the extra effort will be met by the extra response. The 'just the facts' style of her, say, "Diary Notes" I find very uninvolving of the reader, with most of what she writes being given little or no weight or significance. ih))

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Many thanks for SIKANDER #8, the full enjoyment of which was not apparent immediately. I mean, a Ted White article is just a Ted White article and it was only on reading comments in THYME that 'Australian fandom' was shocked and horrified by it, that it occurred to me that there may be more importance in the article than just the contents.

There are two issues at stake here, as I see it. The first is the quality of Australian fanzines and the second is Ted's competence as a critic, and thereby his ability to make the things he most wants to say stick. On the first issue I must say I agree with him to a great extent and I find Australian fanzines dull, although they are succeeding in some small areas that British fanzines are not, principally that of relating fanzine production to sf. Whether this is a virtue or not I have no idea; it is simply that it could not be done in Britain without a certain awkwardness.

Ted's abilities as a critic are not very stimulating. What came over very strongly, however, was how bored he was by the whole business and I feel considerable admiration for the way he must have stuck to his guns at the expense of everything else, just in order to grind his way finally to the ending. It must also be recognised that he could see all the pitfalls that an honest and brutal assessment would encounter - those of producing a defensive reaction and a rejection of outsiders, and of appearing to attack every single Australian fanzine as though suggesting that the task of producing one acceptable to outsiders is impossible. But he's our Ted, inn'e, and if there is a rake he can tread on the wrong end of, he will - there is, for example, a perfectly good word 'woken' and it works just the way Marc Ortlieb thinks it does - but don't believe me, see under 'awake' in Fowler's Modern English Usage.

But there are more important flaws than this. I am at a disadvantage through not having read WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE, but I would have thought Ted would realise that it is almost a cliché that there exist fanzine editors with something to get off their chests. In my own case it is anarchism, not because I am an anarchist but because I have read particularly exciting and inspiring anarchist zines and I feel I cannot drop this ball but have to run with it and pass it. And anarchism would be nice, wouldn't it? I wouldn't have criticised Jean Weber for going to a whole lot of bother just to find out and tell us something we already knew (and if I had, I wouldn't immediately expose this 'knowledge' of mine to be something woolly and cobbled together from slashes and hyphens - but that's just another rake) because this is obviously something very important to her. Why else would she go to all the effort of publishing about it? Even boring fanzines don't produce themselves, you know.

Under my disadvantage, I must find out why Ted didn't like WWW. I know that he is not particularly sexist ("Ha!" "What was that, Avedon?"), at least not to the extent of having a hostility to the subject matter or the cause expoused and I wonder why he is so impatient that Jean Weber has appeared to be out of control of her subject matter. It could be that at the back of his mind there is a stereotype form, of whom we must all have had experience, who loves to hoard and exaggerate his grievances and other items of identity, and to demand sympathy for them. This is the biggest danger of admoatory reviewing, that a fanzine editor will retreat into a protective rapport with his readers bolstered by the myth of big, bad, wolfish, kill-the-fuckers bully boys that will give you a real hard time if you have anything to do with their fanzines, eg loc them. (Sorry, that's the second biggest danger. The first is that everyone will say "Oh, what's the use of all this, then?" and stop.) I have my doubts about some of these people who dress in wally clothes or profess enormous devotion to the minutiae of truly awful television serials - holding themselves up to mild ridicule may let them feel cosy and cement their group relationship but it is all a little too convenient if there is someone an unhealthy bit too domineering or possessive. From what I've heard, Jean Weber does not sound at all like one of these people and good luck to her search for personal truth in public. But Julie Vaux does. I wait with interest for someone to say, "Don't stand for this Ted White. We Australian fans must stick together." Or, "Of course, the Americans always look down on everyone else as not being good enough for their fandom." Or, "What can Ted White know about women's problems?" Julie talks of a "true art critique", underlining "art" instead of the real weasel-word "true" but Ted picks up on it straight away. Watch out, too, for those who use the word 'trufan' to reward their supporters. It has got to the stage now that if someone were to use it of me I would punch them on the nose. Things might not be quite so polarised in Australia, though.

There is a traditional wisdom among fanzine editors that when things are bland and boring there is a need for someone to kick the shit out of a few people in order to sharpen people's concentration and to tighten

matters up. There is also the countervailing view that interference is counterproductive and that we should wait until someone comes along who is good enough to really talk to and meanwhile just be polite enough for our fish not to be frightened off. By asking Ted White for a fanzine review you have changed the ground rules and, like it or not, the article will be remembered as the moment when hard-faced uncompromising criticism came to Australia. I don't suppose I am the only person to feel that I now have to throw in my ha'pence worth - you probably have your own postal sorting office by now to handle all the mail you are receiving. At least your letter column will be buzzing for a while with the howls of angry protest, and a "we'll show him" reaction certainly won't make fanzines any less lively. But the other-worldliness of Australian fanzines is probably over.

I have been deliberately abrasive in this letter, because if you and Ted are going to step up the pressure than I don't see any value in being conciliatory. I am also aware that there are many technical blunders in Ted's piece but that ultimately they should not be used to shirk the consequences of what he was saying. Never mind that Ted's writing is about as bad as some of the people he is criticising - that doesn't make them any better. If there is a territory of those counter-criticising Ted then pre-empt it fast; I myself shall think that anyone who rushes to "agree" with me is a right little twerp.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: JOHN J. ALDERSON; HARRY ANDRUSCHAK; GRAHAM ASHLEY;
BRIAN EARL BROWN; DIANE FOX; MIKE GLICKSOHN; JUDITH
HANNA; ERIC MAYER; JOSEPH NICHOLAS; MAE STRELKOV;
DIANE DRUTOWSKI; MARK LONEY; AL FITZPATRICK; ALLAN BEATTY; TERESA MORRIS;
JULIE VAUX; SAM WAGAR; and HARRY WARNER JR. All unpublished comments
will be passed on to the relevent contributor.

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CONTENTS

letters by

Skel.....	2
Leanne Frahm.....	7
Terry Carr.....	8
Eve Harvey.....	10
Jeanne Gomoll.....	13
Joy Hibberts.....	14
Jean Weber.....	18
Eric Lindsay.....	18
Richard Faulder.....	19
Marc Ortlieb.....	20
Terry Floyd.....	23
Glen Crawford.....	23
Phil Palmer.....	25

art by ATom

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What have you done for fanzine fandom recently?

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