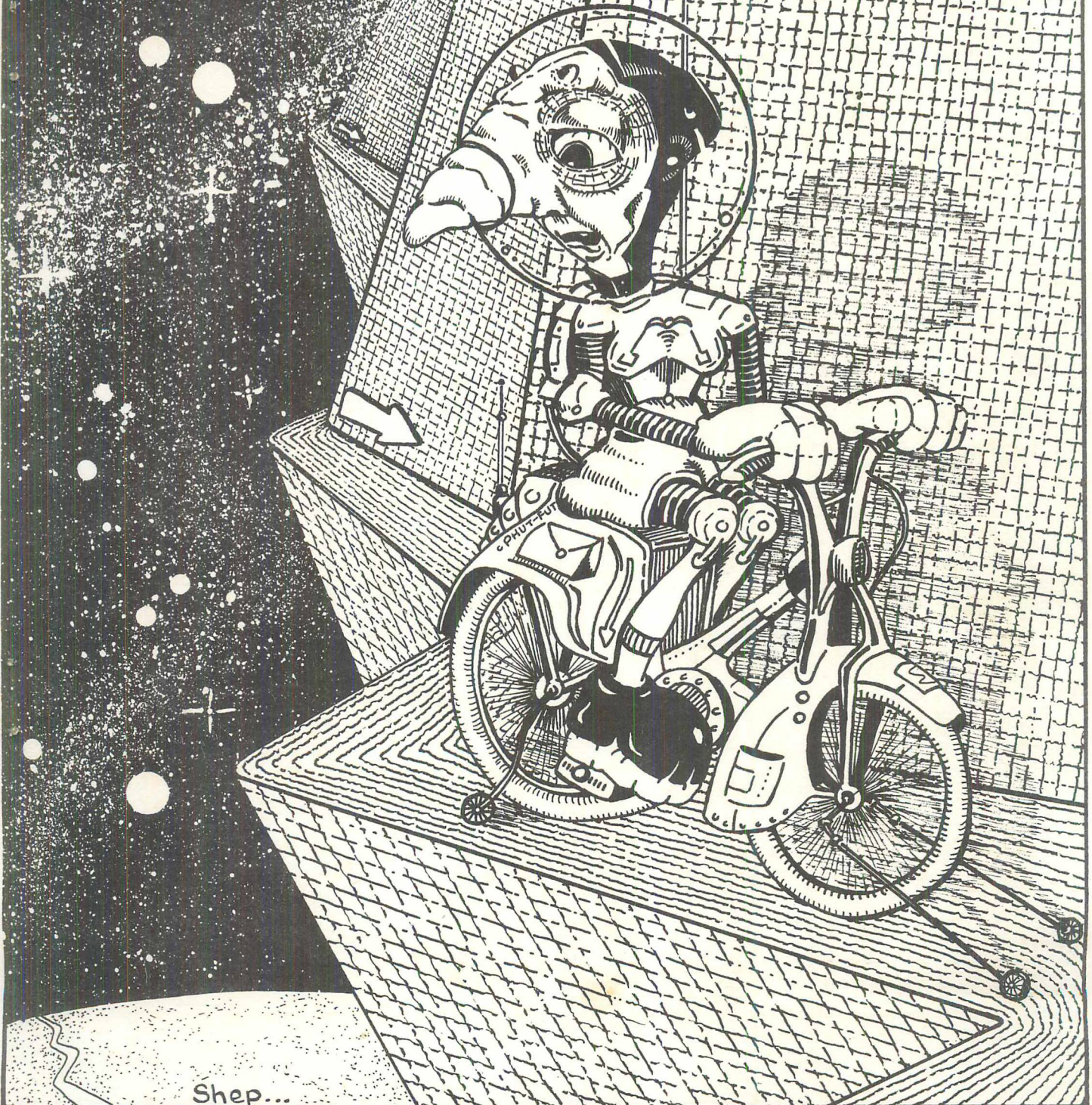


# SIKANDER







# sikander

SIKANDER 12, April 1986, is edited and published by Irwin Hirsh, at 2/416 Dandenong Rd, Caulfield North, Victoria 3161, AUSTRALIA. This fanzine is available for written and drawn contributions, a letter of comment, your fanzine in trade, Old Fanzines, or \$2. \$1 from the sale of every copy of this fanzine will be donated to GUFF. This fanzine supports all sorts of Worldcon bids: Sydney Cove in 88 (write-in), The Netherlands in 1990, and Perth in 1994. Please do the same, okay?

IRWIN HIRSH FOR GUFF

CAPRICE

Irwin (Ed)

Wendy Hinedek graduated from the Institute of Early Childhood Development with a Diploma of Teaching in the same week that I graduated from Victoria College with a Bachelor of Education. Graduating in the same week is just one of the happy little coincidences in which Wendy and I find ourselves. Our birthdays are celebrated in the same month, our aunts are best friends, my father's parents and Wendy's mother's parents were best friends, we were unemployed at the same time, and we got married on the same day. To each other.

We met in March, 1983, at the 21st birthday party of Debbie, one of Wendy's best friends. At least that is where I remember meeting Wendy. We actually met a little more than a month before at Confest, a week long convention organised by AUJS (the Australasian Union of Jewish Students), and it was while waiting in the dinner queue that Debbie provided the introductions. Debbie and I had met, or re-met, a day or two before. She had known one of my sisters through the years, and provided the news that her mother had been one of my teachers and that for a brief time we were in the same school. I remember quite a few things from my school life as a five year old, but Debbie is not among them. Maybe if I had known her sister through the years this would have been different. While Debbie and I had a pleasant time every time we ran into each other at Confest she wasn't part of the gestalt I found myself in, so I was quite surprised when she sent me an invite to her 21st.

The party was held at the Cuckoo Restaurant, up in the Dandenong Ranges about 30 kilometres from the centre of Melbourne. I didn't feel like driving that distance alone, and arranged with a friend, Edwina, that we drive up together. Edwina didn't finish work till nine o'clock, so we



didn't arrive till after ten o'clock. Walking down the stairs to the function area we observed that the party was in its full swing, and we set about looking for Debbie, to wish her the best and hand her our presents.

Standing in the doorway to one room, scanning for the sight of Debbie we were greeted by a loud "Hey, there's Edwina Marshall and Irwin Hirsh!". Shocked, I stepped back into the hallway and quietly asked Edwina "Who is that girl and how does she know me?". "Wendy Ninedek", responded Edwina, not really answering all of my question. Needing to know more I soon sat down next to Wendy, setting in motion the path that see us as a happily married couple.

I find this to be in a rather delicate balance, as any variation from this exact scenario would've, I believe, seen a future in which Wendy and I never went out together. My surprise and shock at Wendy's greeting was all important in me taking such a strong interest in wanting to know "that girl". Had I remembered her from Confest I know that beyond some pleasant chit-chat most of my time would've been spent in the company of people I already knew. And if I had arrived by myself or with someone Wendy didn't know, she would never had exclaimed anything, at any volume. The same goes if we had arrived earlier, before the party had gained a life, before Wendy could feel relaxed in the surroundings. It is strange how such things go.

At a time when she has become the most important person in my life, I haven't made much mention of Wendy in these pages. This is strange given that my own writing has changed from discussing names and car number plates to describing aspects of my life, such as the problems I was having at college and looking for a job. Allow me to rectify this situation.

Wendy was born in May, 1961, one year and twelve days after I was born. The youngest in her family she has, during her 24 years, acquired a set of parents, a sister, and a brother; a brother-in-law; a niece; a nephew; and in one go a husband, a set of parents-in-law, and two sisters-in-law. The diploma she studied for at IECD qualifies Wendy to teach children who are 0-8 years old, though Wendy's preference is to teach kindergarten children.

I don't remember when Wendy and I decided we would like to get married, but something tells me it was in March, 1984, about a year after we started going out and four months after we'd finished our respective college courses. From the time we had handed in our last assignments we had seen each other just about every day and we both knew we weren't making a wild decision about how we saw our future together. At that time we were both unemployed and we regarded it as foolhardy to get married while in such a state. We decided that we would wait till we both had jobs before making any announcements.

Wendy completed her end of the bargain in late June. After sending out



40-50 job applications, and going for 8-10 interviews, she finally got a job. I've already described (in Sikander #10) how I completed my end of the deal, working here and there, looking for that foot into the door of the film industry. It wasn't until late September when I was offered the job as the assistant film editor of The Dunera Boys that I felt that I'd managed to make that vital step across the threshold, and for Wendy and I that was it (but not before I, err, umm, hesitated more than somewhat).

And thus it was that on the afternoon of the 31st of March, 1985, I found myself in Kew Synagogue marrying Wendy, which was followed by a reception. The ceremony was better than I expected, mainly because the rabbi had taken the time, beforehand, to explain the symbolism of the various things which go on in this particular form of jewish marriage ceremony. I don't like that they often signify something that is sexist or stem from the days of arranged marriages, but it was nice to know why the various things happen the way they do.

Although not being a fan of the things I greatly enjoyed the reception, and that despite the fact that it had speeches from the traditional cast, a high head table, arranged seating, and silver-service - all things which I think stifle the urge to celebrate the marriage of your friends or friends children. The lowest point of the whole night was my father's speech. Primed by god-knows how many brandies, my father managed to make an eight minute speech last twenty minutes. By clever use of repeating lines, stopping mid-sentence to remark "I'm making a mess of this", and slurring every word, my father left an audience whose reactions went from embarrassment to unbelieving amusement, through to annoyance and a type of expectation not often wanted: that the thing would finish.

The evening started with us entering the hall to a flurry of balloons and streamers, which set up a good feeling for the evening. I'm told that only greeks and italians have more fun than the jews at their weddings, and that the common point to all three is a willingness of the guests to get up on the dance-floor and throw themselves into their particular traditional dances with a wild, reckless abandon. Certainly the Anglo-Australian receptions I've been to lacked a life compared to jewish receptions, but it was only at my wedding that I'd noticed the difference. Up until then I'd never gotten into the dancing at weddings, but having enjoyed mine so much I'm now ready and willing to get into the action.

In fact I enjoyed and continue enjoying the dancing at weddings and the good atmosphere it generates that I can only wonder why people let things such as speeches intrude on it all. Even if my father hadn't been drunk, his speech would've still been part of the lowest point of the evening. When you consider that they are made by people who aren't experienced at speaking to large crowds, this is hardly surprising. I've noticed that people sit through speeches with a polite sense of



obligation that there is always a big sigh of relief when each block of speeches is over. I know that I can do without the cliches and the sameness from one speech to the next, but mostly I can do without the stating of the obvious. No groom has to get up on his wedding day to tell me he loves his wife, and no father has to tell me that they are proud of their son/daughter, but people do so and will, unfortunately, continue to do so. All I know is that my speech was mercilessly short because I got up and said that I didn't intend to compete with the wedding ceremony as a way of expressing my love for Wendy. And for my trouble I got a few more minutes for getting down from the high table, and the distance it created, and being able to chat with my friends.

That high table wasn't great fun, but it did provide a good vantage point for watching Danielle and Rodney, my newly acquired niece and nephew, and Jonathon and Alana, my newly acquired cousins. They ignored the formalities of the occasion and took advantage of the large space to play all manner of games. Hide and Seek, Balloon Volleyball, and what-have-you. When they discovered that a particular air conditioning duct was drawing air from the room they started throwing up as many balloons as would stay up on the ceiling. I wished I was of pre-teen age, so I could've got away with all that fun.

It is just on a year since that day in March, 1985, but the memories are still exceptionally vivid; a situation helped, no doubt, by the excellent photographs we have of the day. I flick through our photo albums, comparing them to those of our friends and I know we made the right decision in not going to a commercial wedding photographer. Instead we went for a professional photographer whose speciality is the documentary photo.

As an ex-student of photography I've never been impressed by the Standard Wedding Photography, which never comes close to showing the range of emotions that rise at weddings. Missing are the nerves and tension, the fun and friendships, the gossip and bickering. They even, I would argue, miss out on capturing the love; all the misty-edged photos of the couple, the families, and the bridal parties are all so damned formal that there is a sameness from one set of photos to the next. They aren't so much photos of the people but Photos Taken By A Signature. By making everyone line up, posing them their way, the photographer keeps an emotional distance, when what I want is a sense of involvement, of being there.

It is disappointing to think about the photos we would've missed out on had we gone for the usual wedding photographer. As they don't confirm to the standard we wouldn't have the close-up photos of people - our friends - dancing or talking, and generally having a good time.

For that is what I'll want to be reminded of when I rely totally on the photographs for my memories of the day. I enjoyed the reception in spite of the formal aspects, and the only thing formal wedding photos (which we do have) would remind me of is the formal aspects of the



evening. And as I wait for the time when I can't remember my wedding day I guess I'll just have to put up with continually being asked, "What's it like, being married?"

The real answer to such an enquiry is that getting married was such a natural step in our relationship that it is now hard to comprehend a time when we weren't together. A significantly happy step to take, to be sure, but it doesn't make us any different in our attitude to each other or as individual people, and the interest in that step is unnecessary. It isn't any wonder that Wendy quickly developed her stock reply: "Well, he hasn't started beating me yet".

WHAT AUSTRALIA DAY MEANS TO ME 198 years ago, on the 26th of January, 1788, white men landed on Australian soil with the aim of setting up a British penal colony. To celebrate the event Australians got a holiday on the Monday on or after the 26th of January. And every year on the holiday there is invariably a section of the media which conducts a survey asking the question of "What does Australia Day mean to you?" Usually my response would be something along the lines of the opportunity to watch the cricket in Adelaide, but this year I had a different devotion. I spent the Australia Day holiday weekend writing letters with the aim of leaving the country, albeit with a fine streak of nationalistic pride - of wanting to be the Australian fan representative at Conspiracy '87, the 1987 Worldcon. I was gathering nominators so that I could stand for GUFF.

I wrote ten letters that weekend; all to the UK, looking for my two European nominators. With only seven weeks till the nomination deadline and more than ten people having expressed interest in standing I figured I didn't have the time to write two letters at a time till I get my two nominators. It was better to hedge my bets rather than discover that I'm continually approaching people who were already committed to nominating someone else.

It was only a week later that the first replies to my 'form' letters came through. A week later I had received four, positive, replies. I placed the nomination forms and the accompanying letters in an envelope, which I stuck on the pinboard in our kitchen. By the time the nomination deadline came around the envelope had grown thicker with the inclusion of two more nominations. It would've been a bit thicker but for one more nomination which came in after the deadline. I would look at that envelope, trying to decide on which two nominations to use, and I would feel quite embarrassed and proud about its contents. Embarrassed, as I'd gathered more nominations than was necessary. Proud, because these people were nominating me. All those I wrote to were people whose fan activity I'd enjoyed and admired and who I would be honoured to have as my nominators. And here they were, pleased to have been asked and happy to scrawl their autograph on the relevant spot.

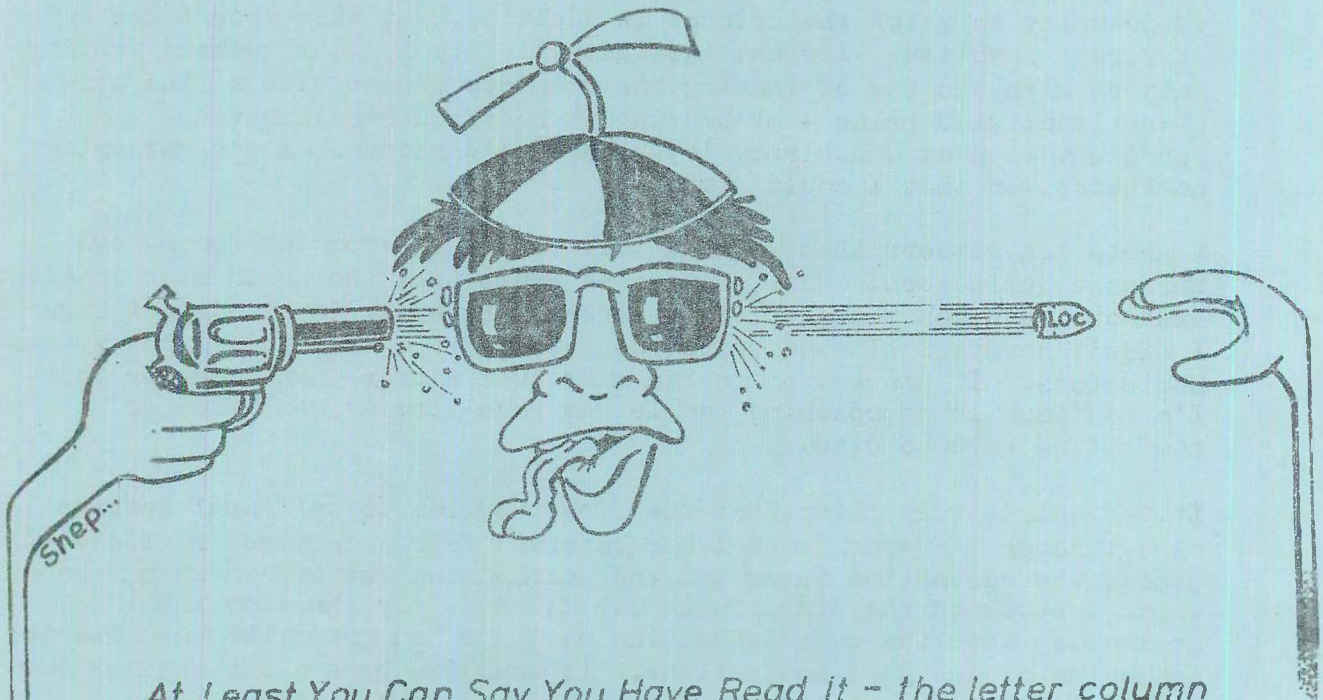
So, I'm standing for GUFF. I'd been thinking about it for months -



mentioned it to Eve Harvey at Aussiecon Two, for instance - and here it is, a reality. The reaction I've received from all those I'd mentioned it to makes me feel comfortable about the decision to stand. And GUFF electorate willing I'll be at Conspiracy '87 and will have the chance to meet all European fans with whom I've been trading fanzines. (Not to mention any of you North Americans who make it over for the con.) Going out with this issue is a copy of the GUFF ballot form, which I trust you'll put to good use. Valma and Jean are, of course, good people and worthy of your consideration. But only your consideration, my personal bias tells me. When it comes to placing a "1" on the ballot form I'd like it to be next to my name.

And this seems the right place to thank my three Aussie nominators: John Foyster, Carey Handfield, and Marc Ortlieb, my 2 European nominators: Dave Langford, and Arthur Thomson, and the 5 other UKers who offered me their nomination. Thanks all.

- Irwin Hirsh



*At Least You Can Say You Have Read It - the letter column*

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Even though you put it at the back of the issue (#10), I found the updating of your personal life in the forefront of my memory after I'd read this issue. Of course, I'm glad you find yourself able to choose among several

reasonably attractive alternatives and I hope the future brings even better prospects in the film industry. I could appreciate the thrill you felt at finding yourself with an official position in a sports



organization you'd long followed. I admit to feeling a twinge of jealousy, when a fellow who had been a sports page writer for the Hagerstown newspapers acquired a job as publicity director for the New York Yankees, the professional baseball team that must hold much the same status in the United States as the Carlton Football Club does in Australia. However, I was able to keep the green out of my sallow complexion through my knowledge that I could never drink enough to hold an important position with a major league baseball team, and I felt much better a year later when he quit that job because of the stormy nature of the Yankees' management.

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I am a freelance film editor - both here in New York and in Los Angeles. For the last several years I had been specializing in music editing (after some six or seven years as an apprentice and then assistant editor) while trying to get a film editing position. Finally, this year, I got a job as one of the editors on an episodic television series called The Equalizer, a show about a good vigilante in New York City, starring Edward Woodward, whose previous claim to USA fame was as the lead in Breaker Morant.

It is both horrifying and inspiring to be editing on a television series. For one thing, I have had more film running through my hands in four months than I would have in two or three years on a feature film. And just as I get bored with the subject of one episode - boom!, it's all done and I'm on to another one. The hours are even more atrocious than I'm used to in features (and they were pretty bad there). We turn over each show in about three weeks and about two-thirds of that time is spent in a seven day week, 9am to 2am crunch. But the show airs every Wednesday whether we get any sleep or not.

It's not art, but it is a learning experience.

I was rather saddened by Diane Fox's comments that she considered her job rather dull. I love working in film, even when I am doing the more mundane tasks in it. I can't imagine working in a job that I didn't like or didn't find rewarding in some respects. Now, working on the television series isn't exactly the most intellectually stimulating job in the world, but it does stimulate me in many other ways. I am always learning (though I suspect that may be more a personal character trait than an industry trait).

John Berry's article touched a memory or two in me, though not about mountains or dangerous cable car rides. The memories are all about moments when I was extraordinarily touched by nature, and both involved water. I'll tell you about one of them.

The first time I was in Europe, I was travelling by myself through the south of France and was staying a few days in Nice. At the end of town there is a park which is perched atop a not-very-high ledge overlooking the Mediterranean. Late one afternoon, after a day of wandering through



the local streets and markets, I walked up the long set of steps leading to the park and roamed through the grounds. There were the normal sort of sightseeing sights - broad overlooks of the Sea and the like. But in one corner of the park there was a little waterfall where I stopped for a few minutes. I began to stare into the falling water and started to see patterns. Sometimes the water seemed to be motionless, other times it moved sideways. Sometimes it fell in huge sheets and other times it separated into individual streams. I started to see the patterns in the falling water and began to look for more. Slowly, I became aware that it was getting harder to see the water, and when I looked around I realized that the sun had set and the park was deserted. I had been standing at that waterfall for almost three hours.

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I have long thought that Rich Brown was one of the most intelligent and perceptive writers in fandom, and his Sikander piece only strengthens that view although I'm not too sure about the premise that "everyone gets the egoboo they deserve...eventually".

I would have liked to have seen Rich say more about criticism too. To me, intelligent, constructive criticism is the rarest and most valuable commodity in fandom. One day - mark my words - we'll put up statues to Joe Nicholas - Fan Benefactor. He may not be a delight to read if it's you who is the sacrificial victim prone on the altar, but at least he tells you about your faults as well as your complete and utter worthlessness so that you can correct them in your next attempt. It's so much easier to be like Rich's mum, but unqualified Goshwows are tedious and meaningless. Usually, even your best friend won't tell you, yet the finest thing you can do for a friend - apart from that - is to tear his little baby into fragments...and then help him stick it together again. It won't help you to achieve very much in the fan-poll ratings though.

Even now I still feel a bit guilty about the finest egoboo I have ever had. In the dedication of the Walt Willis pb The Improbable Irish it said, "To Charles Harris. My best friend and severest critic. Alternately." At least I practice what I preach.

On re-reading this it strikes me how unfamiliar Rich Brown looks today (and so, for that matter, does Charles Harris except that we all know that really that's just me wearing a necktie and a business suit). I think I much prefer the lower case, lower class rich brown. I suspect that deep down I'm one of those leftwing scumbag Commie bedwetting Pedants who would think nothing of typing Archy and Mehitabel.

Mike Bourke  
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I'm divided on Rich Brown's article. The first part was dull, limp, lifeless, and as boring as Economics. But after the anecdote, things picked up dramatically, and along with the cover, this section rates as the highlight of



the zine. Rich quite effectively puts the lie to the old adage "You can never have enough of a good thing". I find myself agreeing with what he says. I would like to expand on a point that Rich fails to clarify sufficiently, however; and that is that criticism should be constructive. Criticising the end product of a writer solely on the pieces' merits is insufficient, also; allowance should be made for the effort invested by the creator as well. Rich's own example makes this clear - even if Vega's anniversary issue was too large to look in detail, acknowledgement should have been made of that fact! If you can't comment on everything, comment on a part of it - with an accompanying statement that further looks might follow when more of the item-in-question's contents are digested. Commentaries of this type would have provided plenty of egoboo for the creator - it would have shown the issue to be a landmark issue, one that was more than a half-hour's reading.

In short, indiscriminate criticism will not prompt improvement, and may well trigger an exodus by the creator from the field. It's not enough to be honest and say you don't like something; you have to try and explain what you thought was wrong about it as well. Effort should be rewarded as well as results.

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I agreed with the basic thrust of Rich's article, but he fails to confront the basic problem in fandom. It is not only that our currency has become devalued; it is rather, that we have many currencies and so set exchange rate. Many people can and have led active and truly fanish lives without ever

having read an issue of Boonfark, Hyphen, or even The Proper Boskonian. The currency these fan trade in convention oriented fanac which may have little in common with how many issues of fanzines one gets due to the writing of quality looks.

More tragically, there are those persons who crave egoboo. I have often run across these people at cons engaging in such obnoxious behavior as waving a costume weapon around in a corridor and delighting in refusing to cease this behavior when asked to stop. Recently, an example of this behavior in written fanac crossed my desk. A self described crudzine came in my mail with a barely legible demand for a trade for PB or Instant Message. I can only imagine that the author would have loved me to have wasted my time by writing even a polite refusal.

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CANADA

I don't think there can be any question that Brad Foster was the fanish artist of 1984/5. His work, all of a superior quality, seemed to appear on two out of three fanzines that reached me during these years. There may be individual artists with more skill than Brad, or with more

versatility, or with greater comic genius but for sheer consistency and prolificity he stands alone.



Good, powerful piece by Mark Loney. He writes well about an intensely personal subject that most of us will be familiar with. I'm as inept at writing about grief as I am at assuaging other people's suffering from it but I could neverthelssss empathize with his words. I've been lucky, I guess, in having only lost two people who were really close to me in 40 years (my mother and my ex-wife) but it seems that every year in fandom we lose people whose passing brings us pain. Recently, for example, I lost Jack Gaughan and Jack Haldeman. Neither was especially close to me but both had had an important influence on my life. I wept for them both and am reminded of my loss almost every day. If there is any way to simplify the handling of these losses, in oneself or in a friend, I've yet to discover it. The best we can do, as Mark observes, is accept things and learn to live with the positive memories. We owe that much to the ones we loved.

Naturally, I agree with rich. This is as it should be as rich has always articulated my own thoughts about fandom far better than I ever could. (He's particularly correct in noting the essential boredom behind economics. Even his own Amusing Anecdote couldn't survive the crushing mantle of boredom needed to set its stage.) If anything, he spends too much wordage on a fairly simple and self-evidently correct idea but as he does his usual classy job on that wordage I'm not complaining too acerbically. Besides, I too have never shirked the label of "elitist" so how can I possibly disagree with such an astute observer as mr. b.?

His example of accumulative egoboo, though, is highly suspect. Had Nydall not gafiated his fame would scarcely have been what it is today. The egoboo accrued because of the gafiation, not despite it. So this concept of accumulated egoboo is not one I feel at ease with. On a personal level, I think the best fanzines I've ever published have gone generally unnoticed because they had small print runs among mostly non-fanzine-fans. So it goes. I never expect any egoboo from those but the personal satisfaction of having done them is still more than enough to make the time and effort that went into them worthwhile. For the rest of it, I've had more than my fair share of egoboo (for which I'm naturally extremely grateful) so I've found that more and more it doesn't matter to me whether the fanzines I produce are well reviewed or not. I do them for myself, not for egoboo, and I know whether they've worked or not and that's what counts. Oh, it's always nice to see one's name in a fanzine but that alone won't keep a fan active. We do what we do because we enjoy it. When that stops happening, then we go elsewhere and forget what the word "egoboo" used to mean.

For example, it was nice that rich mentioned me along with the likes of Carr, Clarke, and ~~John~~ Bangsund but when you think about it, who else could he have used? He needed a Canadian fan personality whose name would be known to your readers and who might say "Well done" to a fanned or fanwriter. Taral is still better known as a fanartist so by elimination he mentioned my name. Is it egoboo to be the only fish in a



very small pond? Now if he'd mentioned me in his list of those wealthy by the proper assignation of egoboo...

Diane Fox  
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Mark Loney's article about the loss of his father and two friends was extremely sad. The bit about his dream about his father especially so. I'd tend to agree with him that seeing the universe as an indifferent place ("the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike") is a better means of coping with tragedy than a belief in a kindly and "just" universe - at least there is not the strain of "justifying the ways of God" or whatever - on top of the already sufficiently great strain of loss. I doubt, however, that religion is always an encourage of the "world is a benevolent place" outlook - there's also the religious outlook that stresses that the world is a "vale of tears" you can expect trouble as long as you are alive, the world is "fallen" and far from perfect - it can be improved but not as much as people would hope. I think this sort of religious outlook would be helpful whenever something had happened. Conversely, I suspect that many people who aren't at all religious see the world as benevolent (probably not consciously) and therefore can't cope when some disaster occurs. It is probably more a matter of temperament than what one consciously believes.

Richard Faulder  
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There was a period a few years back when I was losing, on average, a relative every eighteen months, some of them quite close, including my father. However, I don't think I felt the degree of loss that Mark Loney did. But then, in all cases they were ill and their death came as no surprise, and sometimes a feeling of relief for them, and in most cases the person I knew had ceased to exist some time before, wasted away mentally and physically by their sickness. Just as well, for I had no-one to provide any sort of emotional support. Indeed, driving back from my father's funeral my old car broke down less than half-way home, leaving me to wait for several hours on a cold and foggy night for a train, only to find that I had left the key to my flat in the car, so that I had to wake the real-estate agent very early in the morning to get a spare key.

Robert James Mapson  
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I feel the worst sort of death is the anticipated, lingering kind. Cancer, for instance. The victim, for he is nothing more or less, wastes away day by day, and friends are forced to see what was once whole and good and living inevitably sink into darkness. On such occasions Death becomes personified, palpable presence like a heavy weight pressing down on everybody's chest, making breathing, even living, difficult; or, to use another metaphor, we feel his cold hand gripped about our hearts, all of us who love the victim, until finally the victim's heart is ripped out and there is a strange release, even a sense of joy now that the unendurable trial is over. Part of this pain is of course the unvoiced



reminder that we all are mortal and that our own death is only a matter of time: we suffer sorrow at our own mortality. This is unconscious, generally, but the conscious, no less real, sensation of empathy with the dying is at least as important.

Jeanne Bowman  
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Mark Loney's piece is interesting and provocative - it got my attention, which did some very odd twists as I read along. Passed over the mention of Hodgkin's Disease twice before the recognition struck - my sister-in-law

has that and it was only four years ago that they did the surgery for her second occurrence and came out saying "inoperable". Chemotherapy worked. She's still about and more fun than ever. My son was involved in an almost equally gruesome accident, and survived. Though the period of his recovery has been more difficult for me, in that nursing, while part of a mother's role, is a taxing job, um profession and I had no great previous technical expertise. I do now, I can wrap an ace bandage about a knee blindfolded and I can give brand names of bandages by smell alone... At any rate, neither of these people did die, but they both walked away from death's door. I don't have any personalized christian God concepts to wrestle with, and certainly no illusions about divine justice (although it can be a handy idea at times) and yet it was many months before my usual equanimity was to return. I too have a stupendous support network of friends and family. In fact I was often offered more support than I could accept. And I grieved a good deal during the traumas of my child's recovery (and he is fully recovered). The sense of having had the rug pulled out did carry on for a long time, over six months. And I think Mark deludes himself to think that his age is not as great a factor as his world view in having a relatively quick acceptance. Here in my early 30s death and near death affect me much more than such major shifts did in my early 20s. Like, for instance, having a baby felt like a piece of cake at 23, and for the most part it was - to be considering doing it again at 33 brings on an entirely different set of emotions - experience perhaps, and acceptance and recognition of my limitations even more so.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Harry Andruschak, Brian Earl Brown, Dave Collins, Ian Covell, Leigh Edmonds, Daniel Farr, Brad Foster  
"I give the Craig Hilton cartoon on p 24 my award for the most outrageously funny and bordering on socially unacceptable cartoon of the decade!", Rob Gregg, Michael Hailstone, Lan Laskowski, Shayne McCormack, Jeanne Mealy, Joseph Nicholas, Marc Ortlieb, Marilyn Pride, Sue Thomason, and Walt Willis "Much impressed with Mark Loney's remarks on his perception of the Universe. I've always felt myself that bad luck is easier to bear than injustice, and speculated that one of the reasons for current criminality is that people no longer have the self respect provided by the belief that their plight is a matter of misfortune. Like the old gag: 'it's not so much that you have an inferiority complex; you're just inferior'." Thank you one and all. As usual, all unpublished comments will be passed on to the relevant writer and artist.



# FANZINATIN' RHYTHM

## John Foyster

*Chapter 4 of the 1979 GUFF trip report*

### STRANGER IN A STRANGER LAND

INTRODUCTION I began writing the first draft of this piece in the middle of 1980. One night later in that year, holidaying in Cairns in Queensland, I received a telephone call from Melbourne whose singular and unpleasant purpose was to tell me that Susan Wood was dead. I stopped writing then, ten words into a sentence about an article of Dave Langford's, for my ability to keep thinking about 1979 was painfully impaired. I come back to the task rather older, and with a view rather different from the one I had in 1980. But the plan for the report remains the same.

The overall plan was conceived in general terms long before I left Australia; the details would be formed by events, but I knew that I would not be writing a report which followed a diary model which has been so popular. The first two chapters of Stranger in a Stranger Land - long ago written and published - would follow the standard pattern: the introductory chapter which says, "Gosh I've won and I'll have to make plans", and the second which says "Now here I am in a far-off country". But the third chapter, as yet unwritten, would move directly to the convention itself, and the style would begin to veer away from the continuous narrative and chronological sequence - and indeed, that is just how the third chapter will be written.

The remaining chapters would continue to diverge from what I believed to be 'the conventional'. The present chapter - chapter four - is essentially composed of fanzine reviews. Chapter five deals with my post-Seacon travels around England. Chapter six takes your narrator to Europe, while the seventh and last is to be reflective, dealing with fan fund trips generally and the effect which winning GUFF has had on me since 1979. When I roughed out this plan seven years ago I naturally had in mind a final chapter which was thoughtfully distanced from the hurly-burly, but I must admit that I had not considered the possibility of a completion so remote from its stimulus.

This chapter appears in Irwin Mirsh's Sikander because that fanzine has a reputation for dealing with fanzines and why they are published. The other chapters are being prepared, and are available to any interested fanzine editor in 1986.



CHAPTER 4 Why fanzines? Fanzines are why we are gathered together in this way. That's a slippery enough answer, but in 1979 there were more pressing reasons for paying attention to this subterranean aspect of science fiction fandom. For TAP, Ian Maule and Joseph Nicholas had published By British ('A Fanthology of the Seventies') which coincidentally appeared in time to be on sale at Seacon and, more formally, Kevin Smith edited Mood 70 ('The Best of British Fanwriting 1970-79') for Seacon '79 Ltd. With a total just short of 150 pages, these must be regarded as Significant Publications.

They are significant partly because they were published at all. Both clearly want to present their story about what constituted British Fandom. But both editors are quite direct about their intention:

I don't claim to have encapsulated the Seventies with this collection, and I have no doubts that some fans will tell me I've missed the single most vital piece of fanwriting of the last ten years, and why didn't I ask them if I could reprint it? I do claim that these are some of the best writers straight from the mainstream of British fandom - and that means they are very good indeed.  
(Kevin Smith)

At the outset our aim was to publish a couple of articles from each year of the decade to show the development of British fanzine fandom throughout the period. (Ian Maule)

But for Ian Maule this turned out not to be satisfactory:

However, looking back and re-reading the fanzines and articles that appeared in the early seventies it strikes us that a lot of what we drooled over and thought excellent then is now only suitable as a trap for fanthology compilers - they just don't stand up by today's standards.....

I think what you now hold in your hands is a better fanthology because of that re-think. Looking at some of the original articles we'd selected I can see now that although well written and interesting to me ... the interest they originally aroused was of a transitory nature and is quite irrelevant to the fandom that we have around us now.

There's quite a bit which may be drawn out of these remarks. To start with some facts may clear up a few ideas. This table shows the approximate number of pages reprinted from each year of the Seventies in the two anthologies.

Year	Number of pages reprinted.
1970	1
1971	0
1972	3



(table continued)

Year	Number of pages reprinted
1973	15
1974	0
1975	20
1976	26
1977	30
1978	25
1979	17

The clear message here is that the first half of the decade might as well be erased from fanzine history. Indeed, given that most of the 1975 contribution was a 16page article by Peter Nicholls, and that 1979 could not have been expected to have made a major contribution, we are left with 1976-1978 as the 'memorable' years from the seventies. The 1979 contribution is really just the long revisionist history of the seventies by Joseph Nicholas in By British; this can serve as a guide for us through what might otherwise be a dangerous forest.

The Moskowitz disease - the tendency to see pub squabbles as being of world-shattering significance - is one to which most fan historians are mildly susceptible. Joseph Nicholas's article reveals him to be no exception. Colossi bestride the stage of world history in the form of civil servants using four-letter words as we surge from first section "In The Beginning" to last "Sideways Towards the Millenium" through other less messianically titled sections which nevertheless make us unrelentingly aware of those tides in the affairs of men which lead towards renaissance. But the appropriate place to consider this fanhistorical work is in its proper place - as part of 1979.

At the beginning of the 1970s, JN tells us, fandom in Britain was unhealthy. Yet things could have been worse, for previously there had existed 'a scheme whereby anyone who wanted to publish a fanzine - regardless of their literary, artistic and editorial abilities - needed only to churn out a pre-determined amount of wordage and then send it away for stencilling and duplicating by a "central office" ... In other words, you could be rejected absolutely everywhere but still get yourself published.'

Since this last is precisely how fanzines seem to operate everywhere in the world, and the barrier which PaDS seemed to be designed to overcome was purely economic (thus making it an unusually democratising move in fandom), it is scarcely possible at this point to avoid the thought that we are here dealing with an uncommonly organizing mind, one which likes to put things - and especially other people - in their places. Here, as elsewhere, it is not clear what the desirable alternative is or was, but there is no doubt that the reported practice was yucky.



Speculation was 'internationally circulated, highly respected and solidly sercon'. It isn't by any means certain that any one of those credentials by itself could guarantee exclusion from these two collections, but the last seems closest; the only item reprinted from Speculation is an example of the common subgenre represented - the 'How I'm trying to become a Big Name Pro' confessional which depends for its impact, I suspect, upon how well one knows the author - and that from 1973.

The Saviour, however, is at hand, in the form of Greg Pickersgill, assisted by Roy Kettle and various others. Pickersgill has his initial influence through Fouler, 'a badly laid-out, erratically duplicated and thoroughly tatty-looking ragbag'. (From this description we may reasonably deduce that at this stage Pickersgill was devoid of - at least - 'artistic and editorial abilities'.) Fouler is the source of the first reprinted item - a one-page 'ad' which depends for its impact substantially upon the contemporary British affliction of associating fanzines with animals; its value seems to be limited to reminding us of a long-dead pastime.

1971, despite the continuation of Fouler and the emergence of Gannett fandom, is unrepresented in the collections. This was also the time when fandom in Manchester 'began to clamber its way up from obscurity', and from one of the 1972 fanzines of that group, Hell, Maule and Nicholas reprint the first substantial piece, John Piggott's "Babel Version Five: No. 1". This is an unremarkable account of Piggott's assault upon an apple tree, and stands out by not being about science fiction fandom.

Apart from the Piggott piece, 1972 is also unrepresented. As JN records the history of the times, there were three serconzines - Cypher, Speculation, and Vector (edited by Malcolm Edwards for most of 1972), but there is no room for science fiction amongst the revisionists.

1973 is the first year with substantial representation. Malcolm Edwards' short piece is historically interesting, running up the flag for yet another British Worldcon, but the longer pieces, by John Brosnan and Andrew M Stephenson, represent quite different approaches to creativity - whether in fandom or without.

Brosnan's is the first of the 'Big Name Pro' articles referred to earlier. "Happiness is a Warm Rejection Slip" was a departure in editorial policy for Speculation, but this editorial flickering ensured that this magazine, with 'five final-ballot Hugo nominations', was represented in these compilations from the 1970s. Australian fans who knew Brosnan before he travelled by bus and other methods to Britain - and especially those who endured his conversations about "Echo of Jackboots" - probably find this article more tedious than those who have known only the later Brosnan. This is the brief story of someone who decides he is going to be a writer; there's a serious message, but the



touch is light. It isn't hard to see why John's writing would become popular with the revisionists.

Andrew Stephenson's piece is rather the reverse. It appeared in Blunt (described by JN as 'a large attractive, well-written genzine with an unfortunately eclectic bent that tended to alienate much of its more fannish audience'), and deals seriously with Stephenson's endeavours as a fan artist. At the same time it is transposed into a fictive world, and the comparison with Brosnan's piece tells us something of the differing attitudes towards the writing of fiction of the two. Stephenson tends to grab one by the lapel, while Brosnan plays it for laughs. It is instructive, reading Brosnan, to note how much of the time the final sentence in a paragraph reads more like the punchline of a story than anything else.

The years 1974 and 1975 are reported by JN in a section titled "Close the doors, they're coming in the windows!". The launching of Science Fiction Monthly, the return of Greg Pickersgill to publishing, and a general rise in the activity levels led JN to summarise the period with '...by the end of 1975 fandom was thriving again. The renaissance of earlier years had taken firm root and the future seemed full of promise.' But there is relatively little representation of the period in the collections - a long piece from Peter Nicholls and two short pieces by Roy Kettle, both originally published in 1975, is all the evidence we have about this renaissance.

Peter Nicholls's piece - a report on his attendance at Seacon '75 - may have merit in itself, but there's also something to be said for seeing it as an attempt by an outsider to write like a fan, and in particular a fan who had had extensive exposure to at least part of British fandom in the early seventies. What labels this as the work of an outsider, in part, is the verisimilitude with which it is presented (and the fact that fans in 1979 still talked about it with some awe encourages that view). The exaggerations of events are gently handled - unreal but by no means ludicrous. For example, Nicholls makes much of Marianne Leconte's attempts to interview Chris Priest: 'She was onto the seventeenth tape, perspiring and fatigued, but Chris looked as fresh as when he started, two days ago. He was describing the plot of his new book, La Mer Invertee (The Lesbian Horse).' This is not only the start of a little bit of patter about liquids, but the skilfully developed climax of a series of short, blow-by-blow notes on this memorable encounter.

Furthermore, when Peter Nicholls writes about someone, addressing, say, his cretinism (that topic so much loved of Ratfans), he does so with skill and detail, embroidering the initial impression to flesh out a person for us, not merely someone else's invented straw man. One paragraph suffices to show his skill:

I really like Martin. He has more integrity than almost anyone I



know. He never slackens his valient efforts to be totally offensive to absolutely everyone. He is a man of true dedication. To begin with he's good looking, in a poney way, a fact he offensively hammers home by wearing priceless ivory pendants around his tanned neck. He addresses everyone as "sweetie". He boasts. He name-drops. He bullies waiters. He humiliates people. He is unprincipled. Martin is really incredibly vile. I really do like him for this. He is ubiquitous for this, too. I tried to play with his girl-friend's foot under the table, and only when he fluttered his eyelashes at me did I realise that the foot in question was his. Oh well, in for a penny, in for a pound.

There is much more of this; plainly Peter Nicholls is not the sort of person you should invite to your parties. But in "The Great Seacon Freakout" he produced one of the most memorable of convention reports of the personal experience kind.

Roy Kettle's two fillers, reprinted from True Rat 5, don't really hint at the depth of Roy's talents (revealed adequately in later reprints) but the ad. for was God a Poof? is, I think, superior to the parodied SF magazine titles and stories which are, almost, reprinted in both collections. True connoisseurs of Roy Kettle's writing will be able to argue for years over which cited version of the contents of Science Fiction Plus VAT is authentic - Fahrenheit 487 or Fahrenheit 519, 2161 - A Space Odyssey or 2300 - A Space Odyssey, for example.

1976 saw the return of Greg Pickersgill with Stop Breaking Down. But according to JN 'the promise of late 1975 was not being fulfilled - at least not by older fans'. Readers of By British and Mood 70 will find this confusing; 1976 is the year from which the editors have made the most extensive choice, and the bulk of that choice has been from the work of the older fans, with five pages from Dave Langford (rather less than 20% of the overall selection) being the only contribution by the 'talented new fans'.

Langford's short articles are thoughtfully planned examples of personal writing, amusing in a mildly-contrived way. But anyone reading through these collections in a chronological order - as I am here - would contrast them immediately with the smoothness of Nicholls' piece.

The pieces by the oldies are more varied. Bob Shaw's "Income Taxi" is straight-forward Hyphenstuff which reflects Shaw's accomplished skills - especially timing (Nicholls refers in his Seacon report to others of Bob Shaw's skills, but his sense of timing should not be overlooked). Rob Holdstock's "Eight Days a Week" is another 'Big Name Pro' pieces, one which by simple exaggeration can tell us something about the life of the young pros in England in the mid-seventies, while carefully protecting the author from the perils of genuine self-revelation.

Graham Charnock's "The Grand and Glorious Game of Fanac" was scarcely worth reprinting, but his other short article, "Dodgem Dalmatians", has



moments of inspiration. But whether these one-liners can hold the article together is another matter; it reads very much like an item which started with an idea or two about content and some rehearsed lines but in execution faded out through boring generality, finally lurching back to the punchline.

Roy Kettle's two articles show some of his versatility. (He also has two fillers, the better of which quotes one 'Peter Nicholls' as defining sci-fi 'succinctly' as 'speculation, whether based on established scientific facts or on...' going in for another ten lines.) "The True Cat" immediately brings one out in a sweat worrying that this might be yet another boring thinkpiece about cats. But Roy Kettle does not let one down. The first paragraph amply provides the theme upon which variations are played for several pages:

In the daze of my youth we seemed to get through a lot of cats. We got through them like some people get through Kleenex, and almost as messily, although they were slightly more difficult to dispose of.

"An Interview with Thomas M. Disch" not only provides a stage for Kettle to go over with us some of his major failures as a conversationalist, but also an opportunity to drop some thoughtful oneliners:

My big chance. I followed him. We were alone. Luckily he is one writer whose name is impossible to slur.

"Mishter. Disch?" I said.

1977 was also represented to an extent which belies JN's claim about the performance of older fans. Kettles's "How Not To Be a Writer" is the longest and by far the worthiest reprint in By British. His lightness of touch enables him to be serious without being maudlin, but at the same time he does not veer towards the frantic, as sometimes appears to be the case for other writers on this theme. The two fillers are not up to the standard of the previous year.

Keven Smith's "The Way We Are" is a Damon Runyon pastiche whose charm probably relies heavily upon knowing a little more about the major characters than an outsider does. One may appreciate what has been done in an abstract sort of way, but at that level names may be interchanged freely without changing the impression.

Rob Holdstock's "It's Hell Being a Contemporary of Andrew M Stephenson" suffers by comparison with the other tales of professional life. But Holdstock's ear for a good line reveals itself in several places as he reports on the Dublin Professional Writers Conference. One of the problems of reading a collection of "the best" is that one falls too easily into the sin of comparison (as I've done several times above).

Dave Langford is represented again, this time with a piece from his own fanzine and from a relic one might not have expected to see represented



here - Triode. The filler from Twll Ddu is just that but "The Sound (If Any) Of Music" manages a straight story line better than much of Langford's work.

1978, the last year from which items were reprinted, is represented by only two pieces in Mood 70, of which one is Greg Pickersgill's "Billy the Squid". Given the role ascribed to Pickersgill by various writers in these collections this scarcely seems a fair choice. He starts with an old fan and tired paragraph and then wanders forcefully through a range of topics during the course of which one wonders how much of the writing is in fact self-revelatory - when he writes 'Birmingham or Newcastle or whatever last outpost of civilisation the thing is being held in' is he parodying or exemplifying his reputed xenophobia? - is it a coincidence that he quasiquotes Ian Maule on his being 'as much a nonentity in fannish terms as I am in the other world' immediately after his dreary description of his working life? In any case, given the beliefs of the editors it seems remarkable that he is represented by only one article, and that this was the chosen article.

JN sees 1978 as a period when there was a resurgence of serconism (not represented) and when 'The real highlight of 1978 was Alan Dorey's personalzine Gross Encounters' (also not represented): one wonders just whether Joseph had anything to do with the selection of items for By British, since his history highlights so much material vigilantly excluded from the publication with, supposedly, the same end.

1978 is also represented by a handful of other pieces, somewhat varied in style. It is pleasing to see some of Peter Roberts' damning book reviews appearing as filler, given Roberts' acknowledged role throughout the seventies.

Dave Langford's other piece is one of his little playlets which read so well when you know the characters, but otherwise lose some of the bite. Rob Hanson's article "Shake, Rattle, and Roll" is probably interesting enough, but is about a subject for which I have no enthusiasm (see my GUT platform). Chris Priest, on being a science fiction fan as well as a writer, reveals his skill as a fan writer without compromising professional standards.

And that is it. Some general statements can be made, if these two collections truly represent British fandom in the period.

Firstly, Roy Kettle was unquestionably the most talented of the younger writers. He is widely represented in these collections and whether a particular item is long or short there is no question at all about its strength and direction.

Other writers seem far less exciting - and at times frankly bland, with prose often limping along in the manner which they so easily lambaste in others.

Secondly, these are not quite representative collections: the mismatch



between Joseph Nicholas's historical article and the selections has been noted on the way, but one clearly-missing element is all that sercon stuff at which the Brits have, in a way, excelled over the years. Peter Weston, for example, may not have been able to write his way out of a dependent clause but he did have a way of encouraging others to write in a fashion which brought general recognition to a particular way of writing about science fiction. I may easily be wrong, but it is difficult to imagine an alternative world in which Foundation came into existence without the climate created by Weston with Speculation (despite the curiously low opinion held of Pete by many UK fans). One of the major attractions of fandom for me is that social class is relatively unimportant in determining relationships between fans. I've met fans from over a dozen countries, and in only one country has social class appeared to be at all a significant factor - the United Kingdom.

Yet another deficiency is revealed by the second 'Seacon' '79 Fanroom publication: The Enchanted Duplicator was reprinted yet again, and although there's a Bob Shaw reprint from Maya (which looks to my mind like a recycled Hyphen article, if one wants to investigate pre-history) there's little in the two collections being considered here which come close to be distanced and polished in the peculiar way which the Willis-Shaw collaboration was - because for all the joshing, the writers in By British and Mood 70 take themselves more than a little seriously, for the Moskowitz disease is pretty plainly rampant throughout the colony - not so overt as in Joseph's review, but subtextually significant.

British Fandom thought it important to establish a canon for the seventies - and this has been done with unquestioned success. Yet by doing so they have managed to make it just a little easier to look at what made British Fandom tick then, and to find things the anthologists may not have intended, and which they and their contributors will deny.

What science fiction fandom was lucky enough to get in 1979 was not just these two anthologies, but also a convention which, despite all of its difficulties, was suffused with some of the clearheadedness which informed and informs the British fanzines of the period.

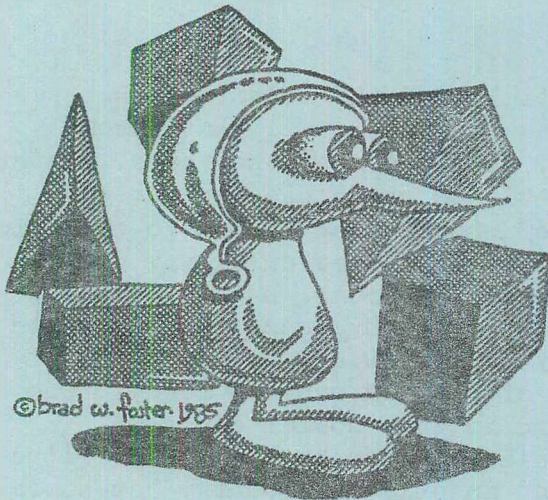
- John Foyster

EDITOR'S NOTE    Mood 70 is out of print, and as such unavailable - I know as I bought the last copy. By British is probably also out of print but I don't know this for sure.

Enquiries about its availability should best be directed to its co-editor: Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh St, Pimlico, London SW1V 2ER, UK.

Previous chapters of John's GUFF Trip Report were published in his fanzine Chunder!, and further chapters are available for publication. All enquires should be directed to John Foyster, 21 Shakespheare Grove, St. Kilda, Victoria 3182, AUSTRALIA.





# Jack R. Herman

Irwin says, "Review Australian fanzines". "Fine", says I. I keep meaning to but other things intervene. What comes first: pubbing your ish or reviewing someone else's? So I procrastinate. Reminders come. I continue to think about it, read fanzines and do no writing. It occurs to me that to review zines I have to know answers to the vital question:

"Why fanzines?"

It seems that Ted White has a fair idea of the reason ishes are pubbed. Siblings Leigh, Joseph, Judith, or Valma could give you several ideologically sound bases for fanzine production. But I am not sure that I know why people pub. I think I know why I pub so let's go from there.

In May, 1978, I got tricked into pubbing my first ish. Quite innocently elected as President of the Sydney Science Fiction Foundation, I found I was committed to edit and publish the club journal, Forerunner. Mind you, I'd always wanted to pub so I was only marginally upset. Forerunner was an irregular, ditto, three or four sheet with little or nothing of more than evanescent interest. I found it easy to turn it into a regular 10-20 page newszine. At that time, news in Australian SF was disseminated via Chunder! and The Masffan. Panew Sletter had recently ceased publication and ASFN was just about to start. I've always thought that writing a newszine was the easy way out (and objected strongly as they have dominated Hugo and Ditmar ballots).

**NEWSZINES** Merv Binns is still keeping up an irregular schedule for Australian Science Fiction News. But it is hardly a fanzine, despite winning a Ditmar. Merv doesn't trade for it and it rarely deals with fandom. Dominant are pro news, new releases, and book reviews. In Vol 6 No 2 fandom fills half a page on page 19. In Vol 6 No 3 there is a bit more: a confused conreport; creating confusion over the 1987 bid by publishing wrong information about the ASFS Constitution; and a page of fan photos. Vol 6 No 4 is a four-pager



stimulating exchanges. This keeps a zine interesting. TN is quite the best of the current newszines.

Behind it, and trailing badly, is Thyme. In terms of number of issues, Thyme is getting close to The Mentor as the most abundant of the current zines, yet it appears to be learning nothing by its constant appearance. The bad habits of too frequent or too hasty production have afflicted it. The reproduction is almost always messy: it is frequently streak or has lines of faded print. Its style is likewise messy. Stories run into each other, there is little attempt to separate items or sections of the zine and the lettercol shows signs of needing editing.

The contents, on the other hand, are showing signs of outgrowing the newszine limits: recent issues have included strong review sections (especially issues 46 and 46 1/2 which looked, if a little negatively, at the Hugo contenders) and a couple of items from Aussiecon Two have commanded attention - transcript of the Sturgeon panel and Peter Burns' excellent compilation of remarks about fandom. The complementary "artist jam" cartoons in #49 were also a fine addition, raising the zine's level. On the other hand, the use of McGann cartoons, even those attempting mordant comment, doesn't help the look of the zine.

Thyme is anarchic in look and feel. This may be a reflection of its editors but it derogates from its appeal.

SF Truth is also trying to grab a corner of the anarchic news market. A new entry from Sydney, S'Truth has too little news and a contributing editor, Terry Frost, who is trying too hard to be idiosyncratic. The look of SF Truth suffers from having too few words on the page and not enough to say. Its occasional reproduction problems do not assist. Since the news market is already replete, Frost and Kearins might be better served trying to make SF Truth into a Sydney genzine - expanding the review section, adding some articles of depth - trying to get some locals to write and illustrate something that will make more of an impact than a mediocre and shallow zine like S'Truth.

THE UNMENTIONABLE SUBJECT When I determined to expand my fanac to include a genzine, in 1979, my first thoughts, for subject matter, were of articles directly related to SF. The sort of stuff that were talked about at cons. The first WAHP-Fulls had an analysis of Matriarchical Societies as written by Male Writers, Interviews with well-known authors, learned criticisms of SF literature and all that good stuff.

Australian zines have something of a reputation for producing, at the quality end, a plethora of great sercon zines, one of the few traditions of serious literary criticism in the genre anywhere. MF was not at that end of the spectrum but the tradition of Australian Science Fiction Review and SF Commentary had some echoes. However, the publication of amateur SF was something that MF eschewed. These conflicting traditions



# looks at recent australian fanzines

dealing almost exclusively with Space Age closing.

ASFN is neatly enough produced but suffers from massive problems of editing: spelling and grammatical solecisms abound, and the prose is rarely better than mediocre. Little of the news is of note, letters are rarely evident and the whole feeling is uninspired. Merv appears to have lost his impetus and the future of ASFN must be very much in doubt.

Far more lively and encouraging is The Notional, Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown's newish newszine. A regular monthly since last April, TN looks the goods as far as any newszine can: it has a neat and clean look; sections are neatly divided and headed; and it generates consistently interesting material. If any sections are weak News and Letters tend to lag behind Commentary and Reviews. News is very dependent on something happening and with four zines covering the waterfront and very little happening, events are often covered previously or of little note.

Like most newszines, TN suffers from a weak lettercol. Perhaps, because it is mainly available for \*money\*, readers are not as inclined to interact as they might with those available for the usual. With only twenty pages per ish, Leigh and Valma might have decided Letters were the easiest area to cut. Still, even a newszine needs the vitality of a lettercol to keep it going.

The strength of TN lies in its regular contributors. Leigh's commentaries and fnz reviews are good examples of strong fanwriting and they have attracted two interesting reviewers of things media: John Baxter and Lewis Morley add more depth here than is usual in fan circles. None of the fawning that is endemic in media zines (or even in Paul Stevens and Daryl Mannell's work in ASFN). One might quibble with Baxter for liking The Terminator - a set of cliches strung together with little sensible dialogue - while running down Runaway, a far more interesting and likable film, but serious criticism of SF film is commendable. Leigh has got some reasonable people looking at literature. Yvonne Rousseau and George Turner have taken part in some



of serious literary criticisms and amateur fiction are the refuge of disparate editors. Some, like Ron L Clarke, see it as the only, legitimate fanzine tradition - to him, they are the only acceptable subjects of SF fanzines.

His zine, The Mentor, is the longest running of the current stable of Aussie zines. The latest is #56. It is also, in its recent incarnation, quite regular - 5 issues since April. It is also, without doubt, the most directionless fanzine I see regularly. For a new faned this would be excusable - "he's finding his way", we'd say. But Ron has been in the game for yonks and The Mentor is still all over the place. Sure, it looks lovely. His offset printer does marvellous work and reproduces his (often second-rate) illos beautifully but he has no concept of what TM is all about - what direction it is heading in. This chaos is no more evident in his shallow editorials. "Ron's Roost" is the only time he allows the editorial voice to appear (apart from a few almost anonymous comments in the lettercol) and his comments cover maybe 300 words - too few words to allow for anything other than a shallow swipe or cheap assertion on whatever he wants to discuss.



The rest of the contents are similar. Poor amateur fiction, B-grade poetry, pop sociology (of the worst of Alderson's analyses) and reports and vignettes from the USSR. (Ron once, quite strongly, said that Australian fanzines should only publish articles by Aussies, so why he has started filling TM with bits and pieces about USSR fandom I have no idea - and he doesn't make clear.) There are the occasional gems of goodness - outstanding in the dross: #53 saw the last of Bert Chandler's columns, a saving grace of many TMs; #54 had a good speech transcript from Dennis Stockes (his 'Con Amore' GoH speech) on his life in fandom; and to a lesser extent, but also in need of editing (like Stockes' piece), Sue Bursztynski's Aussiecon Two report.

The trouble, it seems to me, is a lack of selectivity and a failure to have sufficiently thought out the zine to have



planned and asked for contributions, so Ron falls back on what others send to him. Like the artwork he pubs, there is a policy that leaves a zine that is eclectic. I get the feeling Ron pubs his ish to facilitate the book reviews - he seems to get an awful lot of freebies and reviews them all - even at ridiculously brief length and inadequate analysis: like labelling Piers Anthony's Bio of a Space Tyrant 2: Mercenary as 'old fashioned Space Opera' without mentioning the sex scenes which certainly distinguish this 'new' fashioned Space Opera.

Ron's lack of control is best exemplified by his lettercol which is woefully underedited. The Mentor is a fanzine that is going nowhere.

I'd reckon Van Ikan's Science Fiction has carved its niche out a lot more securely but is similarly not going forward. I wonder whether Van sees SF as a fanzine or a (semi)professional literary magazine. It has few of the marks of the fnz: no lettercol (although Van keeps promising one) and, as a result, none of the lively interaction that featured in the sercon zines of yore. Van trades eclectically and keeps up a fannish irregularity of schedule and he is a major resort of fan art, as the only fannish home of Nick Stathopoulos' art. #19 continues to be like previous issues - a little thin on its critical base. There seems to be a slackening off in neatness. Van barely covers the introduction in his two editorial discussions - there is much agreement left on the issues of original v. reprint anthologies and on the relative merits of Kelleher's Beast of Heaven. I wasn't overly impressed with either of the articles, admired the bibliography and was impressed with the number of responses to Van's request for favourite Auz SF. The resultant list is quite interesting.

I like SF as a concept but it needs more impetus - perhaps, more Dowling input and more from Van, himself.

Bruce Gillespie has got well and truly back in harness: The Metaphysical Review is like SF Commentary revisited. Like his earlier zine, the centre of TMR is the lettercol. Bruce has learned the lessons of the past and has set out his lettercol so you can easily see what is correspondence and what is editorial reply. He is perhaps a little lax in his firmness with his correspondence, allowing them to rattle on a bit much but he gets excellent conversations going. His articles, in this incarnation, lack some of the bite of SFC: Russell Blackford's article in defense of speculative SF (as opposed to extrapolative SF) goes on too long and Rousseau's article on Rottensteiner and Le Guin is at 37pp prolix. I like the idea behind the "Musely" column - a look at music and other non-literary muses - and was knocked out by TMR #4 which was Don Ashby's reminiscence/history of The Magic Puddin' Club, a Melbourne slanshack. It is the sort of fanhistory that we need to get pubbed - and keep pubbing.

I still find Bruce's taste in books and movies very hard to understand. He calls My Favourite Year 'the first new film in a decade with the



pace, style and humour that you expect from a proper film'. Hasn't he seen The Stunt Man or any of another dozen better films of the 80s? He asserts that Stage Door 'has one male character'. Even apart from the males in the play-within-the-film, there are the butler, the lumberjacks, and Gady Sutton, as the maid's butcher.

Like many of the Melbourne faneds he uses only cover art, except for Chris Johnston's illos on the Magic Puddin' Club issue. But his style is so well developed that 93 pages of type is reasonably easy to take - not that they would not be improved by an illo or two. One doesn't need to go as far as Holier Than Thou.

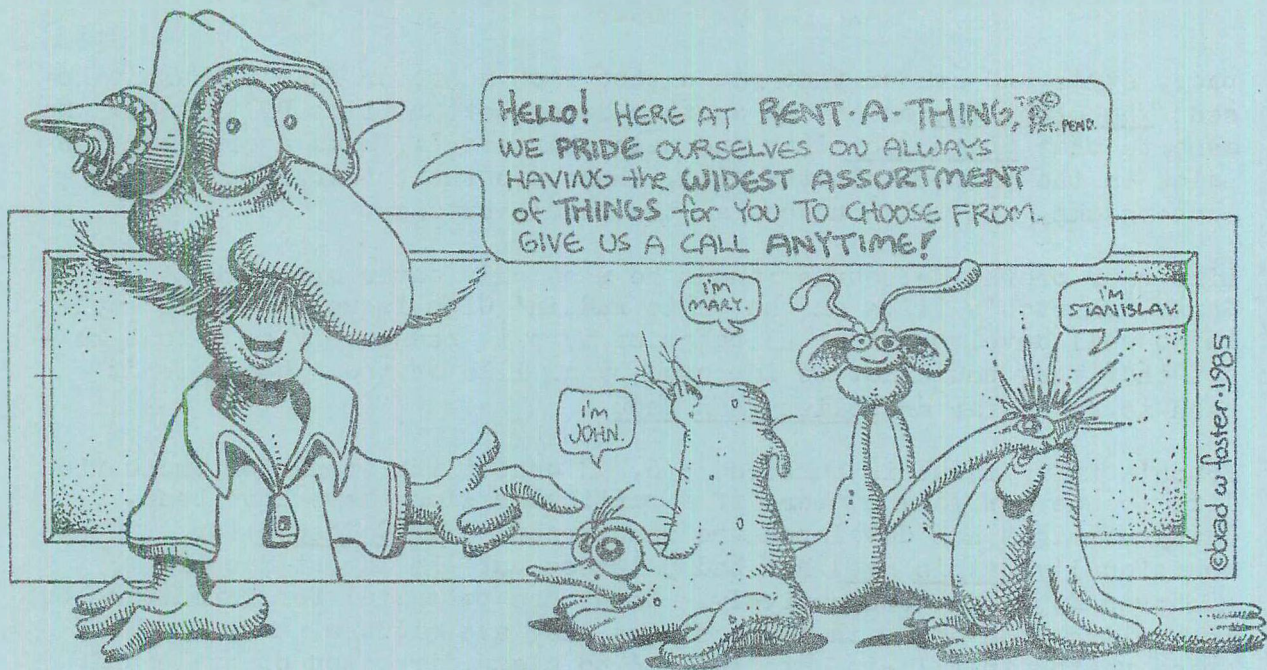
Bruce's fifth issue is numbered 5/6, an unsettling trend for those who like to see how many numbers of a particular zine there have been. Cathy Kerrigan has developed the same trend. Her Cathseye (or occasionally Cath's Eye) has had 5 issues but the latest two are numbered 4/5 and 6 respectively. Cathy has potential for fanediting but is wasting much of it in these zines: they are diffuse, much time and space wasted in fill-in material and no clear direction on style and approach has been determined. Five issues should have got one somewhere closer to knowing where one's going but Cathy seems to have backsled a little. I don't like the look of manuscript correction of typed pages before xerox. The editor can take more care with the typing - especially with the use of Liquid Paper which should facilitate such corrections.

A look at Cathy's contents of 4/5 demonstrates some of her problems: 4 pages of book reviews in a run-on style with little differentiation between books and no depth; 21 movie reviews in two pages!!!; and a brief look at some of Bert Chandler's later, minor works, more a listing than a critique. The issue is saved by the 'execrable' Bridgestock whose article on Creationism is exactly the sort of analysis needed - here is an issue for fandom's unifying mission. #6 does the capsule reviews again and complements them with a brief note on Cathy's overseas trip. Here there is some layout problems. The first page of these notes has eleven little fillos around the script, making it very cluttered, even covering up parts of the illos with the fold of the following page, but then she eschews illustration for the rest of the article.

The lettercol is still in the development phase: the editor is still apologising for cutting her letters and hasn't yet learned to do it well. Nor is she offsetting or sufficiently separating editorial response from letter content. The major article in #6 is a debating point, attempting to assert ESP by denying one argument against it - and not a very strong argument at that. It provides an interesting counterpoint to Bridgestock's healthy realism/scepticism in #4/5 by being the worst sort of pseudoscientific claptrap. Here, again, Cathy demonstrates a lack of consistent philosophy of her zine.

I suspect the same is true of The Mataplan Rave which lurches





desperately close to the status of crudzine. It suffers from multiple reading problems: Michael Hailstone uses small print and tries to fit too much on a page; he has poor reproduction and sloppy set-out and production values; even his staples don't survive long and fall out while one reads. Apart from the occasional interesting tidbit from Albert Vann, the contents aren't very interesting either. Hailstone has some strange-world fiction in each ish and the rest is usually self-written and of various standards. He seems to have printed one article from Nation Review (without permission?) and has a very unedited lettercol - five pages from Diane Fox followed by three from Joy Hibbert (in small type with lots of words on the page) is a bit over the top. Like most Australian faneds, his editorial comments on letters are not sufficiently differentiated from the letters themselves.

The Mataplan Rave is an attempt to reach out and communicate but its form and contents make that communication unlikely.

THE WEIRD/PERSONAL ME still occasionally mentions SF - even if in passing, mainly about SF film if not the literature. As I progressed in my pubbing, I branched out. I had joined an APA about the time I pubbed my first ish and have been a member of about half-a-dozen since then. To them, I have contributed most of my more personal writing, including conreports and reactions to the stress of teaching, finding a woman I could live with, surviving slanshacks, getting married, running for DUT, book reviews, film reviews, whatever. I even tried one issue of ME (15.5) that was a perzine - I don't think it worked - it isn't my schtick - others thought it did. I greatly admire those (like Skel and Mike Shoemaker) who put out consistently interesting perzines. Even those whose zines are weirdly idiosyncratic can get my approval if it is done well.



Forbidden Worlds is a remnant of the West Australian idiosyncratic movement of the early 80s. Robert Mapson has been putting out a series of quite strange collage-zines. Putting in juxtaposition some photos, illos, words (foreign and domestic), anything to create some impressions - even if not coherent ones. He has wedded this to some weird universe fiction. I sometimes enjoy it. #12 (October) is a little more accessible: Robert has some movie reviews (at reasonable length) and some correspondence from Mae Strelkov that create some interest. Mapson has a good eye for layout which makes FW bearable. But, on the whole, little gets from the author to the reader.

Eric Lindsay has been Australia's leading exponent to the perzine. Recently he has revived Gegenschein as a collection of diary bits, letters, reviews, comments, etc. The main drawback is the two column micro-elite style which is incredibly difficult on the eyes - neat though the reproduction is. The other problem is that perzines vary with the skill of the author to convey his ideas and feelings. Arthur Hlavaty uses the diary style and is rarely interesting, Eric is only intermittently more interesting. Too much about computers, for one thing. Still, Eric has skill as an editor and his layout and use of illos is crisp. I am worried by his comments on fanzine fandom - he appears to believe "big is beautiful" and wants more bulky zines like Holier Than Thou and The Mentor. On the other hand, he is promoting (via a Lloyd Biggle letter) the SF Oral History Archive and that's a good thing. On the whole, Geg is an APA-standard zine.

The Space Wastrel is a revival of another of those weird West Aus zines of the early 80s. Unlike Mr Mapson, Messrs Loney and Warner have not been publishing throughout the years and the Loney/Muysert DUFF candidacy seems to be the proximate cause for revival. This ish is more accessible than was once the case with TSW. Gone are the double spacing and the weird universe fiction. In their place are old letters - probably a mistake - and some fair articles - particularly Mr Loney's look at SDI. With Michelle Muysert assisting and Craig Hilton illoing they have turned out a zine with a nice look that bodes well, provided they don't veer off onto the deadend they were pursuing in 1981.

Another West Australian idiosyncratic zine, but much less hopeful, is Apocrypha. Produced by E-stencil from microelite or reduced type, it is a particularly spotty zine with poor reproduction and an incredible eye-strainer it is. The issue under examination has a lettercol that needs editing and needs the editorial comments offset. The articles on fan stages, films, and books are not great and the examination of the cartoonist, Gerald Carr, has less than a page of writing - all explanatory not analytical - and seven pages of intermittently well-produced cartoons. Attached to Apocrypha is Tau Geti, a games zine. Larry Dunning has been in the game a long time but learned very little. I cannot see much hope for his future pubbing.

INTO THE REAL WORLD The direction my fanac has taken of late, especially in MF, has been to take the zine out of



the literary mode and into discussion of the issues raised by the Genre: nuclear power, biotechnology, space, and other pressing issues. I have noted that many fans respond well to this sort of discussion: most are more interested in the issues raised than in literary discussions and find the real world discussions very accessible. Responses to other fanzines working in this metier show similar success.

Stewart Jackson is a further West Australian editor. His zines, though, are more easy to get into. The seventh (August) issue of Living in the Limelight has a wasted cover - if he had no artwork why bother with an extra sheet for the cover? Inside, he has set his work out well although he is of the 'whole-letter school' and doesn't set off his editorial responses. Record/rock discussions are common in LitL and are done quite well. The esoteric fiction derogates from the ish which seems atypical. #8 (December) is better. Rock reviews, an Edmonds memoir about Cream, and a good article on space by Ian Perry. His argument is well developed and shows some planning and thought - a pleasant surprise in fannish discussion. On the basis of #8 I am prepared to give Stewart time to develop his talents fully - but I'd suggest some thought be given to the future direction of LitL and the sort of articles he wants.

Jean Weber needs no such thoughts. She has carved her niche and fitted snugly into it. WeberWoman's Wrevenge is to be less frequent but one suspects Jean will not move away from her current centres of discussion - personality courses, feminism, emotions etc. While her writings about Self Transformations reek of evangelism, this shouldn't surprise as Jean's attitude to feminism, her impetus into fandom and fanzines, has always been evangelical. Unfortunately, the care and attention necessary for strong articles are often missing. She uses APA articles, letters as articles, vignettes, and first thoughts rather than developed ideas. While her lettercol is well edited (although her comments are not well distinguished), the rest of the zine needs editing and tightening up - and it needs Jean looking for articles, not just waiting for whatever turns up or (as in Vol 5 No 1) taking comments from APAs without credit or permission, and omitting vital parts of the things extracted. Her reviews of SF by females is interesting, given her biases and some of her art (Cowling, Rotsler, and Fox) is good but much is not. Her use of microelite typeface makes WWW difficult to read but is the product of an editor who knows her craft, knows what she wants in the zine, does well in both and still isn't making a zine that commands attention.

FANNISH There are those that believe (with a paraphrased Pope) that 'the proper study of fankind is fen'. Here the abstraction from the generic base of fandom (ie Science Fiction) is complete. What is of interest is the life and times of fandom - any event that occurs to a fan can be turned into an article. Often, style becomes more important than substance. Readers of Sikander are aware of this tradition from this very zine. Readers of WF are only occasionally



aware - I have seen the faanish approaches as but one avenue of many. Most fannish faneds see it as "the one true way". The form I appreciate faanfction - which I define as fiction based on fandom: Marc Ortlieb's stories of Leigh Edmonds' "The Scribe" (which I published in MF) but this seems to be a dying art in Australia with only Marc and Leigh left practicing.

The two best fanzines of recent times, in Australia, have been in this mode. Unfortunately, Leigh Edmonds seems to have folded Rataplan's tent and stolen into the night. It has been consistently the best zine in Australia. Leigh has been trying to present a zine to show what he sees as good fanzine publishing - a clean and clear typeface that is easy to read and well set out; an efficiently edited lettercol (though still with the Australian disease which has editorial comment insufficiently separated from text); and a series of articles which knows no bounds. The centre of the zine has been Leigh's fanzine review column: the only regular source of reasoned fanzine criticism in Australia. If only for that, Rataplan would have served its purpose. My major quibbles remain: a lack of interior art (the same tradition as Bruce Gillespie) and a series of typing and grammatical solecisms that reflect a little too much haste of late. (For example, in an article I wrote Leigh has transcribed the possessive of Foxes as "Foxe's" and he is guilty of about ten major letter elisions in the text.) The last issue has an 'article' on criticism which is compiled from several contributions to ANZARA and is in need of massive editing and some work to make it hold better. It is too APA an article for the zine which features fan history, wedding reports, GUTF trip reports, and other items of fannish interest.

If Rataplan is no more, a victim of insufficient feedback, the other hope for fannish fanzines, based in a length of production, is Sikander. Irwin has turned this into a damned fine zine - good lettercols with well setoff editorial comments, good editorial comments and, mostly, good articles. Lastish, with Mark Loney's column, Irwin had good stuff. rich brown's economics and egoboo article was not as good but had the kernel of a good idea. Apart from, perhaps, needing a bit more meat in his article section, I'd reckon Irwin's doing a pretty good job.

After a couple of years absence, Marc Ortlieb is back. He has enlarged Tigger, started as an Aussiecon newsletter, to genzine size. Everything he does is vaguely fannish, but the first two issues of the new Tigger show Marc going closer to the "real world" mode than the fannish. In fact, he may (shudder) avoid categorisation!!! #16 (October) has Marc looking back at the Aussiecon masquerade and a brief fanfic vignette. #17 (December) deals, thematically, with biology (evolution) and has a nice Faulder article on some evolutionary "failures" and Marc looking at a couple of short stories dealing with evolution as sub-text. The standard is not all that high. Marc is not at his best in this mode and the general feel is of something that could be so much better. Marc runs a good lettercol (although he doesn't distinguish his editorial



comments) but I am concerned when a faned puts out a general call for articles in his colophon, rather than assigning writers he would like. Operating a genzine on a twenty page limit is a trifle self-restricting but, at least, Tigger brings back John Packer cartoons as well as other fillo artists' work. I will have to hold judgement for a while but my feeling is that Marc is the best writer on his staff and he has to get the sort of article he was doing in Q36 from that source for Tigger to work.

INTERNATIONAL 1985 saw the arrival of two transcontinental (multinational) fanzines. Crank is a White (US) - Hansen (UK) production and Fuck the Tories is a Hanna-Nicholas (UK) - Brown-Edmonds (Aus) - Hughes (US) cooperative. It asserts that it is a fanzine that is ideologically sound and correct. Terry Hughes says its aims are "to have fun and opposition to reactionary conservatism". It is further stated to be opposed to "globalised hegemonisation", although it doesn't show a case for "GH" in fanzine publishing. FTT has had but one ish so it is too early to accurately assess its success. However, based on that ish it is hard to see where ideological soundness lies: much of the zine is taken up with unconstructive bleating about the oppressed conditions of workers at Aussiecon Two; George Turner talks blandly about opera; Judith Hanna tries to promote the blooming of a thousand fannish flowers (the first Maoist schism in the Internationale?); and Leigh comes closest to giving us some idea of the thought process behind the gang's sophmoric rhetoric in discussing the utility of fanzine reviewing. Thereby answer the question I posed 4000 odd words ago. I am cynical about all fanatics - all those with simple answers to life's complicated questions. I get the feeling that FTT's answers to fandom's questions are just another "one true way" that will dissatisfy more than it satisfies.

Still, five experienced fanwriters and editors together can produce readable and neat fanzines and the hope is that FTT can overcome its juvenalia and grow to become a force in (Australian) fanzines.

CONCLUSION I have a pretty good idea of what I want to do with WE. I have no intention of imposing my model on other faneds but I wish that they would try a bit harder to be exemplars in their metier. With the possible exception of The Notional, there is not one fanzine in Australia that surpasses good (even within its own limited horizons).

- Jack R Herman, February 1986

#### FANZINES REVIEWED

ASFN: Merv Binns, 1 Glen Mira Rd, Ripponlea, Victoria 3182.

THE NOTIONAL: Leigh Edmonds & Valma Brown, PO Box 433, Civic Square, ACT 2608.

THYME: Roger Weddall & Peter Burns, PO Box 273, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065.



SF TRUTH: Terry Frost, 3 Vincent St, Canterbury, NSW 2193.  
 THE MENTOR: Ron Clarke, 6 Bellevue Rd, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776.  
 SCIENCE FICTION: Van, Ikan, Dept of English, Uni of WA, Nedlands, WA 6009.  
 THE METAPHYSICAL REVIEW: Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.  
 CATHSEYE: Cathy Kerrigan, PO Box 437, Camberwell, Victoria 3124.  
 THE MATAPLAN RAVE: Michael Hailstone, PO Box 193, Woden, ACT 2606.  
 FORBIDDEN WORLDS: Robert Mapson, PO Box 7097, Cloisters Square, WA 6000.  
 SEACEMASTREL: Loney/Warner, PO Box 545, South Perth, WA 6151.  
 GEGENSCHWEIN: Eric Lindsay, PO Box 42, Lyneham, ACT 2602.  
 APOCRYPHA: Larry Dunning, PO Box 111, Midland, WA 6056.  
 LIVING IN THE LIMELIGHT: Stewart Jackson, PO Box 257, Kalamunda, WA 6076.  
 WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE: Jean Weber, PO Box 42, Lyneham, ACT 2602.  
 TIGGER: Marc Ortlieb, PO Box 215, Forest Hill, Victoria 3131.  
 RATAPLAN: Leigh Edmonds, see above.  
 FUCK THE TORIES: (Australia) Valma Brown & Leigh Edmonds, see above.

And Jack's address is Box 272, Wentworth Bldg, Uni of Sydney, NSW 2006.

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DUFF: Nominations are now open for the 1987 DUFF race. This race will bring a North American fan to Australia to attend Capcon (the 1987 Australian National Con), 25-27th April, 1987. The winner may wish to attend a relaxacon to be held in Melbourne the week before Capcon.

Candidates must have three Nth Amer. and two Aust. nominators, provide a 100 word platform, and provide a non-refundable \$10 bond. Nominations close on the last day of the 1986 Worldcon, Confederation, the 1st of September, 1986. For further information please write to one of the administrators:

Marty & Robbie Cantor, 11565 Archwood, North Hollywood, CA 91606, USA.

Lewis Morley, Marilyn Pride, & Nick Stathopoulos, 54 Junior St, Leichhardt, NSW 2040, Australia.

Please note that nominations close at Confederation. Voting will start in mid-September, and will conclude on the 31st of December, 1986. The administrators welcome donations and materials for auction at any time, though.

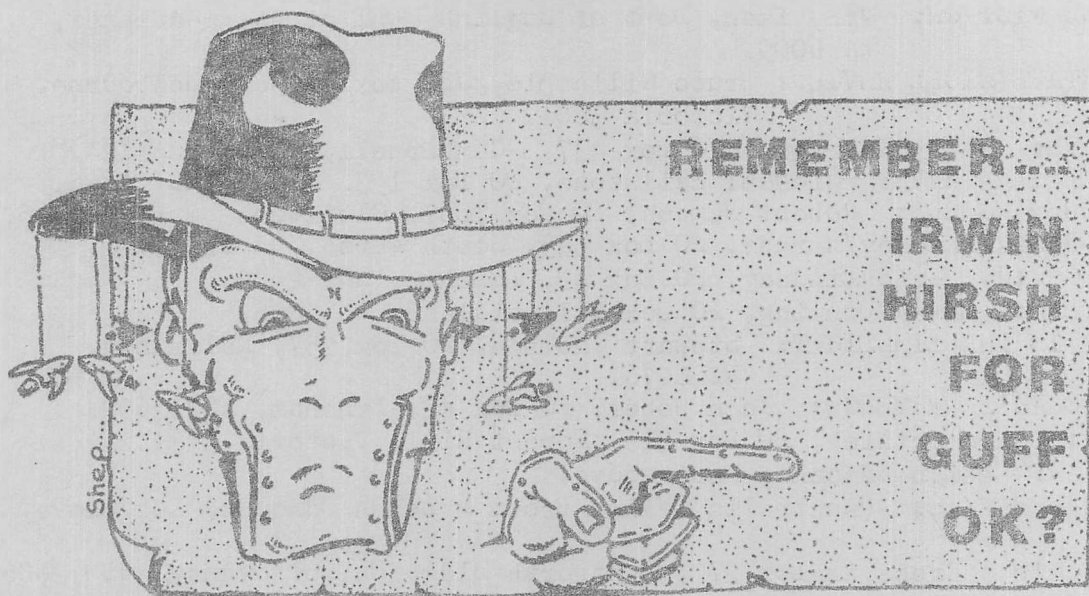
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IRWIN HIRSH FOR GUFF

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SIKANDER TWELVE :: a special fanzine discussion issue April 1986

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## CONTENTS

### Words by:

Irwin Hirsh.....3  
 the readers.....8  
 John Foyster.....15  
 Jack R Herman.....24

### Pictures by:

Shep Kirkbride.....cover,8,36  
 Brad Foster.....24,30  
 Harry Bell.....27  
 Dave Collins.....35

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Who broke Lethal's nose?

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