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SOL IX

SOL

AUGUST 1952

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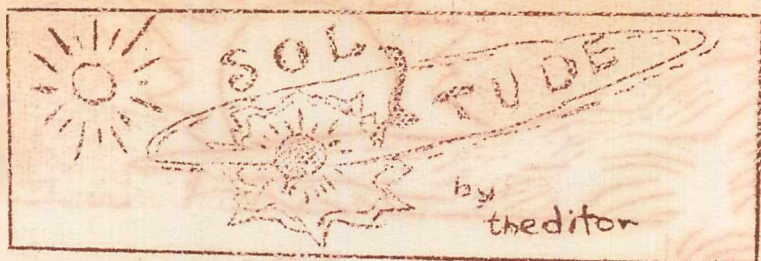
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SOL is the boring magazine of Drill Press Publications, 914 Hammond Road, Ridgewood, New Jersey, and is published irregularly, but somewhere between a quarterly and bi-monthly schedule. Articles pertaining to either science fiction or fandom will be considered for publication, but fiction is not wanted. Cost is 10¢ per single copy, 50¢ for six issues.



Well this is our ninth issue, and although it should be our last (SOL only has nine planets, you know), we plan to keep going, far into the future. We've contemplated changing the title after the ninth issue, but we've decided to count asteroids instead. With this under our belt, (interval for nausea) we shan't have to worry about things for quite some time yet. Besides, we've got 32 satellites to work on after that.

If you readers have been worried over the fact that SOL is a piddling four or five months late, let us quell your fears. We're still kicking around fandom, as you can see by the presence of this issue. We are, however, abandoning the farce of a "bi-monthly" schedule and we're publishing irregularly to enable us more freedom to pursue gafia when it befalls us, and to enable us to present bigger and, we hope, better issues. A pressing schedule, we feel, will turn us quicker from fannish pursuits than a lax one. So here we are with an irregular schedule. We feel that this won't worry you as much as being very late on a bi-monthly schedule has worried you in the past.

Sent along with this copy of SOL. all you lucky readers are getting a copy of our new magazine, Science Fiction Minus. We have been planning this for a long time and we hope you readers get as much fun out of it as we do. Science Fiction Minus is minus stories by Heinlein, Bradbury, and all other hacks, minus artwork by Bonestell; Rogers, Emsh, and

other hen-scratchers, minus boring editorial and features, minus page after page of hard-to-read print, and to conserve money, minus paper. Gentlemen, we give you Science Fiction Minus, do with it what you will.

We've tried, modestly enough, to keep our editorial mouth shut about an abstract thing called seventh fandom, but so many scitzo-ceramics have been tooting their own horns in relation to this subject that we've finally been blasted into making a few statements.

The main thing seems to be 'focal points'. Fans are no longer fans, they are either "neofans", "fringe fans", "old guardists", or (taratatatata) "focal points". Perhaps a little definition is in order. A focal point is someone who used to be a "vanguardist". A focal points fanzine used to be a usual thing, not overpretentious, not excessively laden with crud, just a normal, honest-to-god every other month fanzine. But that was in the old days. Friend focal point was a mere vanguard then. (Or, if exceedingly unlucky, a neofan.) The new era is here however, in more ways than potato chips. Seventh fandom has risen, pheonix-like out of the ashes of sixth. Focal point's fanzine has changed. Focal point now prints material written only by other focal points. This material isn't essentially better, mind you, but it's written by focal points. This has significance. Focal point's fanzine also requires a rather presumtuous philosophy. Focal point is sick and tired of the days when he was treaded upon by Big Name Fans. He must clarify the fact that he isn't a lousy old vanguardist anymore. The mailing wrapper of his fanzine no longer gives merely his address and the name of his 'zine. It also, to z certain degree, expresses the editor's opinion as to the status quo of his fanzine. Focal point's fanzine is now "The Herald of

Seventh Fandom!" (pardon the fingerbone of accusation in the eyeball, Charles), or similar such innanities. After all, focal point is now a BNF, perhaps not self-made, but at least self-named.

Perhaps we shouldn't be so bitter. After all, some of our best friends are focal points. A few rash souls have even ventured an opinion that this editor is a focal point. What we're trying to say, however, is that what some of these focal points need is a mute on their trumpets. We personally frown upon fan-eds who constantly beat the embryonic hairs on their pabulum-covered chests while extolling the merits of their own magazine. No, we aren't talking about Harlan Ellison, because Harlan, in our humble opinion, has got something to shout about. We're talking about fans who haven't got something to shout about but persist in shouting anyway. A magazine should be judged on the material that's in it, not the editors personal opinion of it. We'd like to see a return to this logical set up, that's all.

and, to rather take the weight of too much egoboo off of the shoulders of seventh fandom members, we offer the following focal point:

WATCH FOR WALLY BALLOO! Yes, watch for Wally Balloo. Who is he? Wally Balloo is a representation of the typical seventh fandom member. Wally edits a fine fan magazine, smokes a pipe, writes fannish articles and fiction, some good some bad, dabbles a bit in artwork, reads Mad, an occasional prozine, and generally fills the bill for the average seventh fandomist. You'll be reading articles by him in all the big fan magazines during seventh fandom's regime. Wally Balloo is a composite of all seventh fandom big-wigs, so you'll never know which seventh fandomite is responsible for which

Balloon article. If there was ever a focal point of seventh fandom, Wally Balloon is it.

Plans for a photo-offset picture insert have fallen through due to lack of sufficient funds. All of you that donated money for it will have it returned. Thanx for the help, it just wasn't quite enough.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS... WELL... Our letter column this issue is rather short due to the fact that a lot of the letters we received dealt chiefly with the Ellison letter, something that Harlan and we both prefer to leave undelt with. Since the rather hasty mess that appeared in last issue's letter column, we've seen each other twice, once for a week in Cleveland, and once for a week in Ridgewood, and have come to the conclusion that even though there are several sane and valid reasons for us to be mortal enemies, we are, in the face of it all, damn good friends. We don't bother explaining this paradox, we just ignore it. We trust our readers will too.

As most of you readers know, it is not our policy to print fiction because there is a dearth of it in the fan field. Every once in awhile, however, we will break down our policy and print some as we did with "Scientific, Horrible, Interplanetary Tales" last year. Well, due to semi-popular demand and a desire to see if there really is any good fiction still around, we are publishing a second issue of Scientific, Horrible, Interplanetary Tales, some time in the near future, probably with the next issue of SOL. This means, of course, that we are looking for some fiction of very good quality, and that all you frustrated writers among our readers may chance bombarding us with some of it. We are warning you ahead of time, however, that it has to be good, and somewhat on the short side, preferably with an O. Henry type of an ending. We already have a piece of fiction on hand by Algis Budrys, so you

can see we are really shooting for high quality. Please send us something good, as we're out to make the second issue of Scientific, Horrible, Interplanetary Tales the top all-fiction effort in the fan field for this year. This won't be too difficult as it will probably be the only all-fiction effort, but that doesn't mean it shouldn't be good.

We recall with a slight bit of amusement our fear of almost two years ago, that the Chicago Convention might have no place for a fourteen year old fan. We are older and wiser now, and we aren't too worried about our placement at the Philadelphia Convention. Not after seeing twelve year old fans at Chicago last year, and not after fitting in so well there ourselves. And besides, despite the opinions of Marion Bradley, we are no longer fourteen. In fact, it's been quite some time since we were fourteen. We plan to have a fabulous time there with such aged individuals as Harlan Ellison, Norm Browne, John Magnus, and Karl Olsen, all excellent friends of ours. If you happen to be at Philadelphia and would like to look us up, we'll be only too happy to meet any one of our readers.

And that, until a month or so after the Philadelphia Convention, is that. Let's get some letters of comments in for the next issue, huh?

---Dave Ish

THE FAN ARTIST: SCRIBBLER IN DISGUISE?

By Harlan Ellison

Though of more cursory value than the reading material in a fan magazine, the artwork is no less important. It is the trend at present to discount almost at once anything appearing in a fanzine. This can be, at times, a fallacious policy. There is much being produced in the amateur ranks of a quality equal to and at times exceeding that found in professional magazines, even with their standards at a new, all-time high.

Perhaps one reason why the fan magazine's contents are discounted so annoyingly, is that the inside artwork is of a childishly simple nature. The few artists that possess any measure of talent are worked to the nub and in time drop out of the ranks. There are at present no fannish equivalents of Cartier, Poulton, Emsch, or Finlay. In point of fact, there are no equivalents of the Gaughans, Phillips', or Arfstroms, who, in days of yore, plyed their trades with amazing facility and innervating felicity.

The fan artist has deteriorated from a skilled craftsman, ready to move to the pro-zines, to an incoherent scribbler who doodles out the most worthless paucity--and places

it! And as editor of a fan magazine that finds a very definite use for good amateur artwork, I feel that a critical study of the present situation, on my part, would be of more than nodding importance, since the phenomena is getting more and more acute as the years pass. You see, there are perhaps only ten or twelve talented artists out of the dozens and dozens now practicing in fandom's amateur journals.

With the advent of Meadville, Pennsylvania's Jack Harness, and the continued excellence of the work circulated by St. Louis' Van Splawn, there now exists a roster that is composed of perhaps: Rich Bergeron, Naaman Peterson, David English, Max Keasler, Bill Venable, Lynn Hickman, Joe Gibson, Ray Nelson, Bob Beetem, Robert Peatrowsky and possibly one or two others.

The above named are the true "craftsman" of the field. Not the people like George Viksnins or Margaret DEA Dominick who can and do turn out high quality from time to time, but for the most part are content to roll out hack, because the fanzine editors are not discerning enough to demand better. Most of the above have limitations; Gibson is one of the best, but he's primarily a pro writer and has very little time for superfluous drawing; Naaman Peterson is seen all too seldom; Bergeron can't draw people; Beetem is consigned to the wilds of the West Coast; Venable for the most part slops out crude drawings because he is snowed under with other work; Keasler is hibernating somewhere and has been for nearly a year now; English is no good at serious illustrating, though his cartoon work is of such high calibre as to be comparable only to Virgil Partch or Charles Addams.

Splawn and Harness (and generally Dick Ward) are the only ones who are consistently good. VanSplawn's technique is most closely

related to the flawless artwork of the old-timers, such as Jon Arfstrom or Jack Gaughan, who took their time, and knew the rudiments of perspective, anatomy, and facial expression. For the most part Harness' work is top-grade. His aliens cannot be beaten, and his people are all anatomically correct. However, he is at a loss when it comes to delineating the faces of human beings. He is usually forced to rough in the most cursory of excuses for a face and then concentrate on the rest of the picture, which, in the final analysis, lends a clashing note to an otherwise top-drawer effort. Harness is also a skilled artisan at drawing machinery and symmetrical landscapes such as Paul is wont to do.

Lynn Hickman, when using the name Arden Cary, is as nearly a perfect exponent of the facial expression as you will hope to find. His drawings take many forms and for each he has a suitable nom de plume. Lach, Plato Jones, Lynn Ard, Arden Cray, Namckih, or any one of a handful more are liable to be a false face for Lynn. Hickman's illos under the name Plato Jones and Lach show his great affection for the drawings of Basil Wolverton, who won the "Bena the Hyena" contest some years back, and who has probably influenced the style of Hickman's illustrating more than any one other artist. Nonetheless, Lynn Hickman is at his best when drawing in a serious vein under the pseudonym Arden Cray, and for the most part his other illos under other names are strictly for laughs.

English is probably the only artist in fandom who can get away with scratchy, rude, improbable cartoons as he does. The reason for that is evident upon once seeing a de cartoon. English is a genius of the first calibre. His work bears innately, a hundred thousand barbs of satire and ridicule. His work expresses exactly what he means to get across and the method of presentation is as

uniquely English as the flaming colors of Toulouse-Lautrec are unquestionably Lautrecian. His work is much akin to that now being circulated by Bill Dignin, a young fellow with an amazingly sharp wit. The cartoon work is nowise alike save the fact that each is crude to the extreme. These two fellows concentrate more upon the effect their work can present, than the method of so presenting it.

Insofar as Ray Nelson is concerned, when he is available (being the type fellow you write to all year round for a few pix and he never answers, but when you corner him at a convention he will sit down and draw batches and batches, over which dozens of fan editors will scramble), he is probably the most inventive wit in fandom, being able to whip out hilarious anecdote with drawings in nothing flat. Having watched Nelson work, having seen his startling rapidity in working out a joke line, it is impossible to believe.

Nelson's work is most typified by the ironic-type joke such as his famous one of the werewolf leaping at the throat of a man with a thoroughly confused look on his face, and saying, "But...but...but..." or the one with the woman standing in a gun shop, talking to the proprietor, and looking over her shoulder with a stare of complete and utter horror saying, "But I tell you those bullets have to be silver!" These are only two minor examples of the great and flourishing talent of Nelson. The only trouble is that he's as hard to latch onto as a remnant of the Dodo bird clan.

Max Keasler is undoubtedly the most popular exponent of the perfect anatomy in fan art. His drawings need no explaining here since they have been on the front of nearly every fan magazine now being published. But Max too has been out of circulation, and his work is scarce indeed. Bob Postrowsky is one

fellow who is coming up with such rapidity that his work will soon be classed with that of Nelson in popularity. He seems to be the closest thing to a Cartier that fandom has ever produced. His illos bear a certain strength of line that few artists other than Ed Cartier were able to obtain, and Peatrowsky's wit is certainly a lively one.

But as mentioned previously, these are the only capable illustrators in a field that has hundreds drawing for every fan magazine. Every fanzine has its own private stock of artists, such as Ron FLESHMAN and Arden Faulkner (both excellent, by the way!) of John Magnus' SF, and Lawrence Hekelman, Bob Athearn, Phyllis Miller, Gail Sprague, Ray Gibson, Bill Dignin, George Ollson and a number of others from my own SCIENCE FANTASY BULLETIN. But for the most part, these artists are not fans, not affiliated with the fanzines in any way but the most fringe-ish. They are contacted whenever an illo is needed, and then their work is done.

Such artists as Orville Mosher or Ray Thompson, who slosh out, for the most part, screwy little alien-like squiggles, are by no means artists. They bear the same artistic talent as myself, who is capable of doing two little personal characters and an occasional good piece of artistry under a pen-name, but in the quantities that they have been placing art, giving nothing to the field but worthless scribbles.

The field is direly in need of thirty or forty good artists, who can be depended upon, as Harness can be, to turn out exactly what the fan-editor needs when it is requested. As it stands, the insides of these fan magazines featuring art are blotchy and at times nauseating. The work of Share and Meril Shrewbury, for examples, are, in the whole, revolting, being nothing but horrid bits of persiflage. And on the other hand, it is

perhaps the inability of the fanned to reproduce the artwork correctly that detracts me from the "beauty" of a fan artist's work. Bergeron's art, when not lithographed or done in color, loses about seventy per cent of its uniqueness, being rendered almost pointless. The cover that featured a huge blue entity with a spaceship zooming across its bulk, would have been not only pointless without the entity blue, but would have been atrocious also.

There must be a closer affinity between the artist and the editor. Not so much this: "We want any old kind of pix of 2" by 3" size..." but more of this: "Dear Bob, enclosed find several pieces of art paper, cut to the sizes of the illos I would prefer. On them I should like three line drawings depicting the scenes circled in the enclosed story. Please do not have a preponderance of shading as I've not perfected my mimeoing yet and they would lose a great deal in the transition..."

With that sort of closeness, the fan artist, who can be construed as nothing more or less than a scribbler at present, will reach a new high in excellence, and the fan ranks will benefit from it immeasurably.

---Harlan Ellison

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THE FINE ART OF

INSANITY

By Su Rosen

Did you ever get one of those ridiculous little notions that you can't seem to shake for love or money? One of those silly little preoccupations that shadows your every move and hits you sometimes when your back is turned? I've got one currently. I've had it ever since July 13th of last year. Oh, it's a very high-minded, scientific, deep, abstract thing. It's perfect for mulling over on long bus rides, intolerable study halls, blind dates, B movies and insomnia attacks. But the chew of the thing is, it also hits me during important tests, dull but vital lectures, and periods of supposed inert concentration. At times, I can feel the damn thing coming on. My eyes glaze, my jaw takes on a ruthless bite, my chin finds its way into my palm and my very posture is the picture of philosophical concentration. I probably look pretty damn silly, but that's the way it goes. If I had a beard, no doubt I would stroke it.

Want an in on this notion?

Well, actually I didn't think you'd say yes. But I'm going to tell you anyway. The impatient may, in all politeness skip the rest of this...if you even get this far. The psychiatrically probin' and the morbidly curious may even find it interesting.

By now it's old hat in the STffical world that Man Should Not Consider Himself Ultimate in any way. Ever since the introduction of the mutant and his motley kin, we've been sitting on our expectant fannies awaiting

the arrival of his RH, Homo Superior. The poor unfortunate apes that we are, we're getting to feel pretty inadequate. Right now, I get the oddest feeling whenever I start to peel a banana. But what I'm really trying to get over with is, Why Not Sir Superior..Right Now?! Maybe even for ages and ages. We're a pretty material lot...live for the bulk of our lives in a completely physical state...concerned primarily with the care and feeding of our physical self. This may be considered somewhat of an adaptation for the lives we lead...the physical lives. Take the case of the dog...the dog is concerned with only two things, food and sex. This is a mental adaptation because he doesn't multiply at all fast and there aren't many kinds of food he can eat. The dog doesn't know in the slightest that he is kept as a pet of man, his superior. In fact, he is just vaguely aware of the existence of man. The large part of the lower animal kingdom...the ones below Homo Sap...do not know of a superior of any kind. They are not physically or mentally capable of comprehending superiority. Most of them are ignorant of even the existence of higher forms of life. Why not so with man? Why not a superior so far above man that man does not comprehend his existence? Why not an existence that is beyond the sight of the physical senses...senses that are tuned by the presence of matter and matter alone. Why not something called an "immaterial" existence...not understandable to a matter-conceived organism?

No, I'm not saying that "we're property." It's just that instead of being divided into the plant and animal kingdom, we could be divided into the Materially existent and the Immaterially existent.

Well, like I said, it's just a silly notion that plagues me during study halls and the like. I'm sure it's nothing to get worried over.

Yah, I know..."Who's worried?"

FANDOM, GROW UP OR GET LOST!

By Ed Wood

It is apparent by now that 1953 will not be a good year for fandom.

A "whithering away" process which I had anticipated and written about to a number of my correspondents as long ago as 1948 seems to have come to fruition this year. Consider: Fan review sections in Amazing Stories and Startling Stories gone; reader's sections in Amazing Stories, Fantastic Adventures, Famous Fantastic Mysteries (as is the magazine) gone; readers' columns in many of the new magazines not apparent or without addresses. Thus many of the previous sources of new fans are no defunct. To be sure, the picture is not entirely black. The del Rey and Lowndes Magazines, such as they are, seem to be friendly to fandom, but until they have proved themselves, they cannot be considered as being of major importance.

Many of the functions of fandom and 'fan magazines have been usurped by the professionals and the professional science fiction magazines. The book reviews which were once such a large portion of many fan magazines are now well established in many professional magazines, reaching a far larger audience than all the fan magazines put together. Now articles dealing with the methodology, philosophy as well as history of science fiction are now appearing in the professional magazines, the Lowndes magazines being pioneers in this phase. Now with such books as Modern Science Fiction: Its Meaning and Its Future, many of the things which fandom had such unique opportunity to utilize, passes forever.

Think of the wealth of material about science fiction which fans could have used in the fan magazines. But humor and fannish personality won out. There is nothing inherently evil in most of the fannish material in the fan magazines. It's just that there's little good in it and it is a terrible waste of time. The World Conventions, once fandom's very own must now pass to the people best fitted to run them or else the very concept of conventions must be changed.

A. Conventions

In the April 1953 issue of Variations published by Norman G. Browne, a sad item appears. Lyle Kessler of the Philadelphia group charged with putting on the 11th World Science Fiction Convention, has a letter asking (in a rather too abrupt manner) for help in advertising the details of the convention. This must have struck Browne in a sore spot as he replies in an explosive way totally unworthy of him. Not content with accusations of "profit making", he hounds Kessler through the rest of the magazine using quotes and answers from this exchange as filler material.

Now let's be reasonable about this. Personally I don't think fans matter a tinker's damn when it comes to doing anything. Anyone who relies on them as a group, relies on a broken reed. It would be best for Philadelphia to ignore the "fanny" fans. They're more trouble than they're worth. With the convention less than four months away at this writing, the Philadelphia people probably have more than their share of troubles and work to take care of, than to also worry about fans.

Mr. Browne makes the statement, "It is common knowledge that World Conventions are big business. It is also common knowledge that they make a profit. It is also a well-

known fact that the Chicago convention grossed in the neighborhood of \$5,735.00... Now let's get the record straight. When \$6,000 is considered "big business", then it is obvious that we are dealing with people that are getting an allowance of 25¢ or \$1.00 a week. Listen here, I have always believed that "for nothing you get nothing", and if you think printing bills, hotel bills, telephone and decorator's bills can be paid for with piles of old fan magazines or fannish personality, then think again. What does it matter how big the gross is unless one knows the net? The financial report as given in Bob Tucker's Science Fiction Newsletter was badly done, and I have tendered my opinions to the policy-making people responsible for the Chicago Convention. Regardless of the technicalities, no one can ever tell me that vast profits could possibly come out of such things as a \$1.00 membership fee or that stupid auction. I think the conventions operate under a tremendous financial strain, as items have to be bought and paid for before revenue comes in. Think how hard it would be if you personally were to put on a convention and had to rely on "promises". (See D. The Willis Campaign Fiasco.)

B. Regional Conferences.

Since it is difficult for people to always make the long trip to a World Convention, the regional conferences have come into prominence during the past half-decade. Note the Westercons, the East Coast conferences, the Ohio meetings, etc. Here again the problem of money comes into play. Usually auctions or the altruism of a few people is used to pay the expenses. The conferences work but only because a need for them has developed.

C. Fan Magazines.

At one and the same time, fan magazines

have been both the glory and the shame of fandom. Sam Moskowitz in his The Immortal Storm so thoroughly the origins and growth of the fan magazine phenomenon that any additional discussion would be presumptuous. Today, with the clock turned back to the pre-1939 days, it will be even more difficult to obtain the small and limited circulations that have been obtained. Not everyone cares for or wants fan magazines. Also a form of Gresham's Law seems to work here as in the rest of fandom where the bad drive out the good. Rog Phillips with his "The Clubhouse" column in the pre-slick Amazing Stories was instrumental in bringing fan magazines to the attention of science fiction readers. But by his uncritical attitude, he did a great deal of harm (as well as good) in spite of very good intentions by forgetting that "He who praises the bad, seeks to corrupt the good." He has never been able to understand this. I have written letters to him. I have spoken to him in person about the matter. Regrettably he brings out the isolated instances of fan magazine editors who told him not to review their magazines anymore because they didn't want to expand their circulation past a few hundred. Well what did Confucius say, "The superior man is patient with women, children and fools"?

There are perhaps ten or so good fan magazines, about half of which I expect to hit the dust by early 1954. A few fan magazines will be able to increase their circulation because they will pick up the readers from those that are defunct; analogous to what happened to a number of pulp magazines during 1951-52. When the circulation of a number reaches a saturation point, that's all there is, there isn't anymore. If then it is no longer possible for the news of the magazine's existence to reach potential subscribers, then it will die. There is

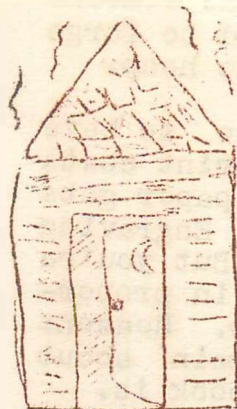
always an attrition rate on subscribers such as dying, losing interest, getting married, etc. all combining to decrease circulation. Also the need for the distinct type of fan magazine may no longer exist. I would like to consider the case in point, namely that of Roy Squires and his Science Fiction Advertiser. (Don't get me wrong, I subscribe to SFA, and I shall attempt to get it as long as Squires has the energy and enthusiasm to put it out. It still fills a limited need, and his material and format is of the best.) There have been noticeable complaints about the lack of ads, a situation over which Mr. Squires has little or no control. In 1946 when Gus Willmorth started Fantasy Advertiser, the selling and trading of books, magazines, and even fan magazines was brisk and profitable. With the influx of new science fiction magazines in 1949 to date and the appearance in the libraries of new science fiction books, the very lack of sufficient reading material was filled if indeed not saturated. Today, there are no longer many extensive ads by book or magazine dealers in SFA. Yes, there will always remain an extremely limited market for books, magazines and fan magazines, but nothing compared to the extent of 1946-48.

So the ebb and flow of history takes its remorseless toll...among the good and bad. Of little point to enumerate the long and dreary list of defects of the fan magazines. It has been done many times before and will be done many times in the future. There are many things that fandom can still do with its fan magazines if it had the will and courage of its convictions. This writer has no Messianic zeal to transform into his own image or ideal, fandom, but there is a certain sadness when the thought comes, "What if the motto had been: Not many, but good?" So many fan magazines published, and about the only apt remark is "why?"

D. The Willis Campaign Fiasco.

If Mr. Walter A. Willis of Belfast, Northern Ireland had depended exclusively or even in a minor sense on fandom in making his trip to the 10th World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago 1952, he would have had to come over on a raft. Never was the total bankruptcy of fandom revealed as in this miserable showing. It is an insult to Willis and the few people like Shelby Vick, Henry Burwell and Lee Hoffman et al who did contribute the lion's share of the funds, to broadcast loudly the lie that "American fandom brought Walt Willis to the 1952 convention". I contributed \$1.00, not \$1.01, or \$.99, but exactly \$1.00 to the Willis Campaign because I felt this should be a true test of American fandom. It was a put up or shut up deal. The talk was loud and long. The deeds were very, very small. I have maintained for years that when co-operating with others it should be a half and half procedure. If I like a proposal; I'll go half way; not a millimeter, not a single millimeter more. I resent the way a few must work while listening to the rest boast like delinquent hyenas.

What will be the import of these words, I neither know or care. Like many another reader of science fiction, I have stood on the sidelines for many years, watching the fans come and go. These foolish creatures of the short run, eaten up by their own egos. Yet there still remain the "true" fans, the old guard who still cling to their dream of a better day for science fiction. These few have made it worthwhile. Perhaps in some future year, some new reader of science fiction will come and ask, "Why didn't you do anything to prevent the smash-up?", and a few others will stop and look at him or her and say, "We failed, not because we did not fight, but merely because we were too few."



FROM WHERE I SIT

By Harold Van Dall

The height of Midsummer is upon us, and what, for you and me, is a time for simply stretching out and gasping for water, is, for publishers, a time for stretching our and gasping for sales. Big sales, small sales, sales in New York or in Oolah, Louisiana, but sales.

And, all too often they don't get them.

For some reason, the reader who is burning in December is all too cool in May. As far as spending money on magazines goes, anyway. No one knows why, for sure. Whether this is because he is on vacation somewhere, and away from the familiar newstand to which his feet have so steadfastly marched in the track of habit, or whether he's just too enervated to reach into his pockets is something which has long been a matter of--you'll pardon the expression--hot debate in publishing circles.

But August is the month when the print orders are cut back, and the distributors glower. It is the time when the soundest book may suddenly find that it is skating on ice no more thick than that which cools the judge's pitcher of water in the bankruptcy court. So, all kinds of things may have happened in the stiff magazine field by the time the Worldcon has set its faerie foot in Philly.

Look for some of the Johnny-Come Latelies to the field to have returned to the lowering pit that spawns them ^{up}--but look for newcom-

ers, as well. Expect a rate war as someone brings out a new magazine designed to forge a place for itself at the top of the heap.

And, expect the fifty cent magazine to have increased its numbers. Why? Newsprint costs are still mounting, and all other paper gets its price adjusted in accordance. Engraving and printing will cost more, too. But you're almost certain of getting as much, in proportion, for your money as you are now. Reason: Engraving and cover stock costs remain about the same, no matter how thick the book is.

More paperback science fiction books will be coming your way, as Shasta extends its present program with Pocket Books, and Gnome dickers with Ballantine in an effort to set up a deal whereby the hardcover end of the publications will be handled by Martin Greenberg's company.

Expect turmoil in the fantasy market. No one seems to be sure of what the public wants in the way of--quote--"grown-up fairytales"--end quote. Whether we wind up with autotherapy or stories that go Foomp! may be something to be decided by John Raymond, FANTASY FICTION's not-too-sure-of-himself publisher. Z-D may be expected to publish one or two authentic pieces of fantasy by accident, but UNKNOWN is dead unless it develops that fantasy, of any sort or kind, is all that babies cry for. No plans of any sort for UNKNOWN are underway at Street & Smith, and none are expected from a publisher who would be only too glad to cast off its one remaining pulp--aSF--if the damn thing didn't persist in making all that money for its unwilling owners.

And that, as it says on top, is the way I see it from where I sit.

---Harold Van Dall

From under the nose of an idle Bill Postler,
SOL brings you a

WISH I'D WRITTEN THAT!

By Charles Dye

In front of my desk, where I am writing this, there stands a bookcase stretching from floor-to-ceiling and from wall-to-wall. It contains over 2,000 books and magazines. A rather large percentage of this miniature library is either science fiction or fantasy. Now, asking me to pick out a story I wished I'd written from the above collection is like asking me to jump on a horse and ride off in all directions at once. For example: I wish I had written practically everything that appeared in the old Unknown and Unknown Worlds. The same goes for Astounding during its--for me anyway--Golden Age (1940 up to 1944), but nothing much beyond that. There are a dozen or so hard-cover novels I wish I had written, plus any number of off-trial pieces which appeared in a score of magazines normally never featuring science fiction or fantasy.

However, I'm splitting cobwebs. I realize that you realize no writer can be expected to single out one isolated story and say, "I wish I had written that above all others." --even in the still somewhat limited confines of science fiction or fantasy. So, at random, I've picked the below story as the sort of thing that not only I wish I had written, but that I wish I was capable of writing. The story is that tremendous!

Back during the late war, Ziff-Davis published a pulp called Mammoth Detective. And believe me it was mammoth--150,000 words and up every issue! In the drivers seat of this behemoth was none other than our old friend Raymond A. Palmer, always a highly eccentric editor, but commercially, always a

successful one. I don't, however, wish to infer that Mammoth was a magazine for crack-pots, as both Amazing and Fantastic then were. Nevertheless, in quality, Mammoth was definitely the typical Palmer-type magazine.

But on the November 1944 issue of Mammoth Detective: One whole two-column page of the editorial was given over to one of Palmer's usual long-winded puffs of the Hollywood "super colossal" build-up type.

"We have a prediction to make. This issue contains a story you are going to read twice! And maybe more times!... 'The Metal Monster Murders' is that kind of story--the more times you read it, the more you find in it... Here, we say, is a story that is one of the finest mystery plots ever conceived. And we say too, that it is one of the most logical, convincing and completely worked out murder stories ever written... Lastly, we believe that in this story you will find a murderer building up the most unusual alibi ever conceived--and we predict that you will not be able to 'solve' either the crime or the 'alibi' in advance."

And in an actual preface to the novel, Palmer continued: "The main reason that David V. Reed is called the 'collector' and not the author of the story is the fact that the following pages do not, strictly speaking, constitute a story in the usual sense of the word. Rather, as the by-line indicates, Mr. Reed has here collected and related the raw matter of what might well have been one of his best stories. Thereby not only hangs this tale, but the decision to present it in this way."

After the above blurb examples plus the lurid, unoriginal novel title itself, you can imagine with what misgivings I started this 92,000 word "compilation" by David V. Reed. I was in the navy, at the time, and five hours later at 5 in the morning, I was finishing the story in the washroom of the head, the

only spot left on the station with any lights burning. When I finally laid the magazine down I wanted to go out and shout to the stars. Never had I felt so elated--except many years before, when reading for the first time those wonderful L. Ron Hubbard novels in the old Unknown.

For once, believe it or not, Palmer actually understated all of his blurbs. Even the title fits the novel perfectly. There could be no other title. "The Metal Monster Murders" is the most sinister, strange, baleful, ghostly tale I have ever read.

The novel centers around four pivot points. Two of these points are human beings, men. The third is a gigantic junk yard, a scrap metal depot. And the fourth is a "Thing"--a new form of life. It was, according to its own words, a form of metal life. It had come into being of itself, with an awareness of itself, and an understanding of its position in a world of another form of life.

The first of the humans is Elliot Hammond, a newspaper feature writer, and the first of the two hero-villians of the story. Hammond bumps into an old friend, Jim Shilling, who he hasn't seen in years, author of a novel called "The Silent Room"--a man who has traveled over much of the world. And shortly thereafter, Hammond is caught up in the coils of a nightmarish paradox that slowly leads him down to madness. Four things, which first appear to the reader as only symbols, start unhinging his mind: "...a sound more clear than sound...the iris of a grey eye contracting...a sun-drenched bubble of mud exploding in milky chocolate film from the heat...the cold gleam of imagined moonlight on rusting metal."

Later, the strange things happening to his mind lead him into surrealistic awake-sleep interludes in which he imagines himself in the third person of "the sleeper".

"Wracked with pain, in a dreamless, haunted slumber, the sleeper tosses uneasily in his bed of darkness, in a room with no windows, behind an iron door. The air is foul with nightmares. Over his head, breathing in unison with his broken rhythms, alarmed and wakeful, his portrait hangs on the wall. The murderer comes into the room soundlessly, so swiftly that the sluggish air whirls behind him in semi-visible eddies. He goes at once to the bed and stands for a moment looking down at the naked form on the white sheets. With a sudden thrust he plunges a pale hand deep into the sleeper's body, grinding his teeth, writhing, sweat pouring down him from his exertion, and tears out the sleeper's heart. The heart leaps convulsively in his hands, but he tightens his fingers until shadowy rivulets of blood have traced a delicate pattern down the length of his forearm. He begins to laugh hysterically, when he looks up and sees that the portrait has witnessed everything, its face twisting in agony, screaming inaudibly. He reaches up and stuffs the heart into the open mouth, then tears away the portrait's face. Carefully, with nimble fingers he wraps the heart in the fragment of canvas and hurls it through the farthest wall. Very slowly, still struggling, it falls through the transparent darkness to a far-off gutter and is washed away. The bloody hands are wiped on the wall and the sheets, but even before the murderer has left, these distinct stencils have turned violet, then grey, and are gone with him. In the morning, at the precise instant when a stray dog has finished eating the heart, the sleeper is discovered. He lies very still. Only his eyes can move, but they rotate in their sockets without being able to see what has happened to him, and because of this he does not understand the turmoil in his room. The murderer comes in to see him, wringing his hands, weeping as he vows to save him. Thousands of shocked, sympathetic people search the city for the heart, and the dog follows one group, helping them look."

For Hammond, the story all began during the last summer before the late war when he sets out to do a feature article on New York City's scrap metal drive. He goes to the Acme Reclaiming Corp., the largest scrap metal junk depot in the city.

"I remember the first day I saw it. It was some distance on the southern outskirts of the city, near Jamaica Bay, touching the ocean. It was enormous, a huge thing spilled out on waste land. Part of it was on hard, ridged, weed-ridden lots; the greatest part of it lay in a vast muck and oil-black wet of swamps; and part, the smallest part, was more water than land, composed mainly of shallow reefs close to the indefinite ocean shore. This whole great area, easily hundreds of acres, was piled high with waste metal. It was a fantastic mess of stumpy, jagged, girders and lithe springs, of bolts and bars and shining wheels, of tin and iron and steel and shavings and bits of exotic metals. It was the dumping ground for these things, and parts of things, that people no longer wanted and which other people had taken from everywhere in the world. Black and grey and green and bright orange with rust...bent, mis-shapen, broken, twisted, torn...in strange, distorted heaps and valleys and mountains, it lay in the silence that surrounds the noise of the city, festering in the sun.

"There was something about that depot that was, well, more than the work of man."

This was where Jim Shilling lived--the second of the two humans (also the second hero-villian). Several years before, Shilling had written a brilliant novel "The Silent Room", which had been acclaimed by both critics and public. And then for two years, after his money was gone, he had been unable to write and he began to disintegrate little by little. Finally, one day he was gone, no one knew where.

When Hammond runs into him again after the absence of years, Shilling is in charge of the scrap metal depot and is living in a houseboat right in the middle of the Jamaica Bay yards. But what a fabulous personality Jim Shilling turns out to be! He's a man who has come back from years of intellectual and emotional disolution looking like a Greek god. And intellectually and emotionally he is a combination of Cagliostro, Svengali, and Lafayette Ron Hubbard! (For all I know, David V. Reed may have patterned Shilling deliberately after Hubbard. Both Sturgeon and Van Vogt used Hubbard in stories: Elron in "The Golden Egg", and Enro the Red in "The Players of A.")

And lastly, we come to the fourth and final pivot point, "The Thing". The story of the thing is also part of Jim Shilling's story. For it was Shilling who found this strange, living intelligence in the yards, a Being fused by some great cosmic accident. It possessed vast powers, telepathy, invisibility, communication by speech, and some unknown, subtle means of locomotion. The Thing, moreover, had an awareness of self. It understood its uniqueness in the world and was increasingly morbid because of this.

To even attempt to give a plot-synopsis of "The Metal Monster Murders" would be impossible. The character cast, for instance, numbers 27 (incidentally, included in this cast are Henry Kuttner, Manly Wade Wellman and Alford Bester). The novel is too complex with psychological cross-currents and misdirections. Besides, it doesn't have an ending --or rather it has three endings! All equally brilliant. Also the author or "compiler" David V. Reed himself is part of the story or "collection", for it is he--for a very definite reason--who has compiled and arranged this fascinating collection of simulated diary extracts, newspaper clippings, private letters, courtroom trial transcripts, etc. The typography alone is a triumph of ingen-

uity, making almost all of the material and the story it tells look remarkably authentic.

Actually there is no satisfactory conclusion to the novel (within the novel framework itself). 25,000 words from the collections' end, the story suddenly stops and David V. Reed steps in and offers three of the most intensely brilliant hypothesis, or endings, I've ever seen in any novel or short story. And all of them conflict with each other. Yet one of them is true!

"The Metal Monster Murders" is also a tale of ratiocination in the grand manner, the manner of Poe's early tales, and Conan Doyle's. Only once before have I seen the nightmare brilliance of this novel equalled--and that was in Hubbard's tremendous psychological extravaganza "Fear".

And in all my reading, only once before have I come across a tale of this type with more than one ending---John Dickson Carr's supernatural mystery novel "The Burning Court", the only tale of this type he ever wrote (and the only first-rate novel he ever wrote. He'll agree with you and tell you this himself.

Concerning "The Metal Monster Murders" again: There is still one mystery I don't understand--and that is why this novel never received any acclaim, why no one seems to have read it, or even heard of it, and why it was never snapped up for hard-cover book publication.

---Charles Dye

...AND WHETHER PIGS HAVE WINGS

(In celebration of the return of this erstwhile column to the pages of SOL, I've inveigled fantasy impressionist Ron Thomas to capture some of his mental meanderings on paper for the benefit of fandom and posterity. --H.G.)

by Ronald Thomas

Write a fantastic thing. Better write about a fantastic place. Get out of here, out of yourself, out of these realities. Write about profound waters spread black between two deserts, lands without shadows of dying things. Here are eternal sands, soundless waters. Here is a wind of tinted music blowing across the moving white sands. Here is clear and uncluttered unrealness.

Now secure in our fantasy we can regard ourselves with the floating wisdom of detachment, and we can consider with curious candor our attempt to escape to this peaceful place. We note with hilarious insight that we have done so merely by arranging words as a child arranges pretty colored blocks. With words alone have we constructed this magic land.

But our laughter falls and stirs up the dust at our feet, and through the dust we peer at the dulness of solid reality. We want our dream worlds, but unfortunately we are sane and observe that we have tricked ourselves by creating them with words, with elusive chunks of inspiration. Yet we recall the delirious moments of creation and the sensuous pleasure-labor of laying colored bricks to build surrealist structures, rose veined, glass cathedrals on universal landscapes.

So we shall write fantastic things, for now we know the strange delights of the fantasy maker, for we too have become makers of fantasy and have moved in the tall walled but roofless chambers of imagination. We shall know the many worlds that can be made with weird words.

FANDOM

&

ME

By Norman G. Brown

To me, fandom represents a miniature counterpart to society. Fandom and society are similar in that in each there are certain goals to be realized and certain assets and faculties needed to attain these goals. But in fandom, the goals are infinitely more simpler and more tangible and the work involved to attain them is realitively easy.

In society, one of the prime assets needed is maturity and age. An individual may have the experience and knowledge necessary for a job but he can be turned down because he is too young. In society, you need age and maturity to gain and hold respect. In fandom age is of no importance whatsoever. In fandom, its mainlines of communications are letters and fanzines and age has no bearing in these because it is not the physical side of fans that is being dealt with, but the mental side. In fandom then, age is of little significance because it is mentalities that are being dealt with.

In society, money is of prime importance. If you have money you can make money. If you have money you can buy position, power, influence, and friends. There are very few people who can start with a shoestring and work their way up to multi-millionaires in our present-day society. In fandom money is of some importance; but not to the extent that it is in society. In fandom, an individual can have fun, rise to a position of importance and success on a very small budget. It is few fen who can't raise the money to buy a postage stamp for a letter or some paper and ink for a fanzine.

One of the last things that fandom and society have in common but which fandom has an advantage on is population. In society, it is a dog-eat-dog, survival-of-the-fittest, continuous challenge for position. In the whole world there are 2 billion people, in fandom there are 2,000. In any field of endeavor that you try to gain success in there is a population greater than that of fandom as a whole. Society is a rigid, unmoving mass that you have to fight, push and shove your way through in order to gain the things you need for your success. Fandom, on the other hand is a fluid, resilient mass that is worked with and through. It is a group where it is relatively easy to learn exactly what is going on in any of its parts at any time.

In fandom, then, it is relatively easy to reach a goal whose counterpart in society would have required maturity, age, money, influence and a vast amount of experience and knowledge. What does it require to become a successful writer in fandom? Compare the work involved in fandom and society in becoming an artist or a poet. Would it even be possible for you to become an editor or publisher in society? But in fandom....?

A case in point was when I applied for a job as a copy-boy at a salary of \$20.00 per week on a big city newspaper and was turned down. If I had been accepted for the job I would have been made a reporter in five years --but still just a reporter. In fandom, I can edit and publish a magazine of my own and make a success of it for so little.

But fandom hasn't got a complete advantage over society. Society has an advantage that fandom lacks. Society is a state of specialization while fandom is a state of duplication. Society can offer an almost infinite number of jobs and goals to attain while the number of things you can be in fandom can be listed on the fingers of two hands.

In fandom, what can you be? You can become a fan-editor, a writer, artist, or poet; depending upon your talent. You can be an organizer or head of a project. You can rise to a position of importance in some club or organize and run your own club. But after that what?

This is the problem that now faces me. I started out at the bottom of the ladder of fandom and gradually worked my way up. As I worked my way up, I gained knowledge experienced about all the things possible in fandom. I recognized fandom for the counterpart of society that it was and I set out to do all in fandom that I couldn't do in society. I also recognized that fandom has only so many possible goals that could be attained and I set out and did attain as many as possible.

That is the problem that now faces me and I have solved it by setting myself a new purpose in fandom; a purpose that should keep me going for many a year and never let me get bored.

My purpose in fandom is simply to take an idea and make it a reality. Once that idea becomes a reality, I drop it, lose interest in it and go on to another idea in need of development.

Now you say; isn't that what most active fans are doing now? No. Most fans have not defined it as tightly as I have. Most of them have or are developing ideas but will continue to stick with them and will get into a rut of boredom and duplication.

As I say, I think my purpose is fool-proof. I have a vast amount of knowledge and experience gained through my acquired work in fandom. Using this and the contacts and influence I have acquired, I should be able to work with fandom in developing any and all ideas that appeal to me. There is the added asset that ideas are indefinable intangibles

-3-

and vary to an infinite degree in the amount and type of work needed to develop them.

Many may say that nearly all the work-albe ideas have already been developed in fandom. I don't see it this way. For one thing, you can give two people the same idea and they may use different methods, different approaches, and different styles in developing it and will probably arrive at different results. The fact that it has been already developed before is of no significance. The fact that I have never developed it before is of great significance. The idea may be old and previously developed, but by the time I am finished with it, the original idea may be unrecognizable.

Then too, there is the fact that an idea may take any shape or form and the developed results may also take any shape or form. You can get a simple idea for a fan article or story. You can get an idea for a series of articles. You can get an idea for a fanzine; you can get an idea for a project. An idea may take two days to develop; it may take two years. It is possible to keep well ahead of projects under consideration and development. It is also possible to have a number of ideas under development at the same time--thus eliminating boredom.

In conclusion then, I have found that fandom is similar to society but that fandom is limited in the number of fields of endeavor it is possible to rise up in. Having exhausted all fields of endeavor in fandom, I have had to re-define my purpose in fandom. Even now, I am gradually re-aligning my interests and activities in fandom to conform to my new purpose.

I hope to have fun, and only time will tell how I meet and conquer the challenge that my new purpose and station in fandom presents me.

---Norman G. Browne

S H E ' L ' B ' Y V I C K
by " "

TO B OR NOT TO B: Suppose I get into the BNF question; the BNF -- What Is It? Seems to be a lot of fen are worrying themselves sick over how they ever acquire that title. As I see it, it all depends on the individual tastes. There are two classifications from which you can pick. If you are a technical-minded sort, you'll take it on face value -- BNF; Big Name Fan. Meaning you've had your name bandied about a lot; enuf for quite a few people to recognize it.

However, maybe you're an idealist; in that case, the three letters mean something more to you; something equivalent to knighthood of the old world, or the title of Duke. In that case, too, you are narrowing the field down to a very few-- here, to measure up, there are responsibilities that must be shouldered; character and strength mean as much as activity.

There are your BNFs. Take your choice.

PLUGS, BEING NEITHER EQUINE NOR SPARK: First, let's take a look at the fanzine world across the seas. Up pops a grey-covered vinyl fanzine, name of CAMBER. (Means having something 'r other to do with a convex curve.) Edited by Fred Robinson at 63, Newborough Ave, Llanishen, Cardiff, Glam., Great Britain. Costs 15¢. For themost, the milny-o work is quite readable, and you might call the cover a work of art. (Tho actually it wasn't Art, it was Bill -- Bill, the Price, what did it. Combining good art with good cartooning, he came up with a first-rate item. Inside, there is a certain Filbert the Fan, complete with helicopter beanie, who is handled by Bill Price and put thru a few amusing episodes. Inside we also find a column by Hal Shapiro, other material by D Griffiths (pardon, ~~that's D~~ Gifford. I got him confused with Howard Griffiths.) Plus Sandy Sander son, and a quiz by Tony Thorne.

There's more. It's a fanzine name of ANDROMEDA, pubbed by Pete Campbell, 60 Calgarth Rd, Windermere, West., England. This'n's two bits, and promises each issue will be bigger-- quite a feat, since it's starting with 50 pages. Seems as how they go in for fan fiction, sense and nonsense. Try.

And now, we come back to the stated. And immediately, u p pops BEYAGRAM. It is definitely the most outstanding new, vinyl zine to hit box 433, Lynn Haven in the last few weeks. Van Splawn, 440 West Pine Blvd, St Louis 8, Mo. 10¢. It's

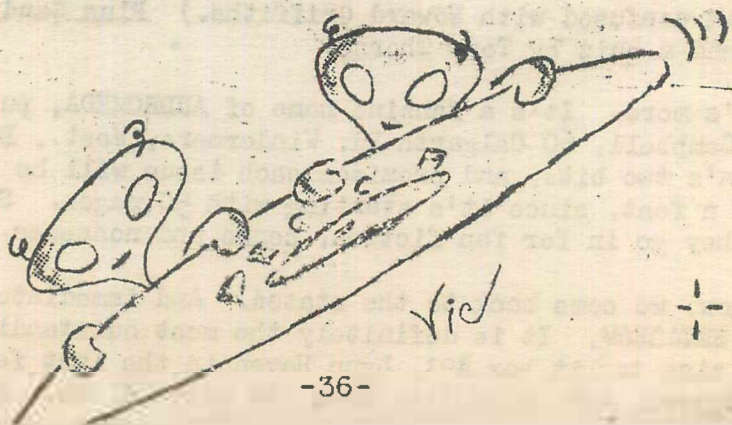
admittedly a thin one, but none of the material can be objected to. ...Egad, but that's a roundabout complement! I meant to say that all of the material was good -- very high level. If the quality remains the same when the quantity is increased, Van will make himself another reputation.

FOR THE RECORD: In case you didn't know, there are two (2) genuine, real, died-in-the-wool s-f songs on platters now. This is ignoring hill-billy things like Honeymoon on a Rocket, and it's ilk. These two are not only good songs, but are recorded by top artists, on name labels. (Labels.) One is by Ella Fitzgerald, on Decca -- TWO LITTLE MEN IN A FLYING SAUCER. This one has been out since before the Nolacon at least, and maybe longer. Flipside is THE HOT CANARY -- the flipside being the one you have more likely heard.

The other one, more recently added to my collection, is one recorded by Johnny Mercer, on a Capitol label -- HELLO, OUT THERE, HELLO. Don't recall the flipside of this one; JUNE IN MADRID, or something like that. (NOT, I am sure, APRIL IN PORTUGAL.)

Both records are very good arrangements, with catchy lyrics and a bit of philosophy (or satire, or whatever you chooses to call it.)

If you like pop music, make like a flea and irritate your nearest music shop until they get these two platters for you. Yes?



EGOB00

WALTER A. WILLIS.
170 Upper Newtonwards Road
Belfast, Ireland

Dear Dave,

Got SOL. Those sunspots that girl has or is she just feeling a little rash? Clarke's name is Ving, not Vinge, unless maybe you think he was christened Vincente. Liked your editorial, I usually do. I liked Marion too, which I usually don't. This seemed to me quite a sensible article and tied in neatly with the controversy at the back. This may be either good editing or happy coincidence. Ryan also was very good, in fact better. Ryan just came far enough in fandom to make us all realize what a loss it was when he left. Saddening to see him go. Shelby Vick's column rather shows up the rest of the magazine. Wouldn't it be nice if all SOL was as neat and clear as this? Bloch's letter was typically amusing and untypically sensible. I was going to suggest a double-con set-up like this in an article to be called TAKE TWO, THEY'RE SMALL. Probably still will.

Now about Harlan Ellison's letter, which is the most interesting thing I've read for many a long day. I like Harlan. I think fandom needed him. Don't you remember in the old days that however interesting fandom was there was always something missing, some indefinable lack? The proof is...well, just try to imagine fandom without him. Without ~~that~~ ^{his} ~~papers and voice~~ ^{papers and voice} at conventions? Without that muddly, margin-justified, and magnificent SFBS? Without these occasional enthusiastic, sincere and ebullient outpourings in other fms? Inconceivable. However I think he is a bit off the beam here. I re-read that issue of SOL and found very little if at all anything wrong with it from the point of view of taste. Nor was the material crap. You were right to be indignant with him on those scores. Where he had you though, was on the question of SOL's appearance, and I guess you admitted as much to yourself for this issue is an outstanding improvement from that point of view. Since you sort of broiled me in this affair by quoting me in an interlination I'd just like to say that I do think that faneds

