
Starling
29

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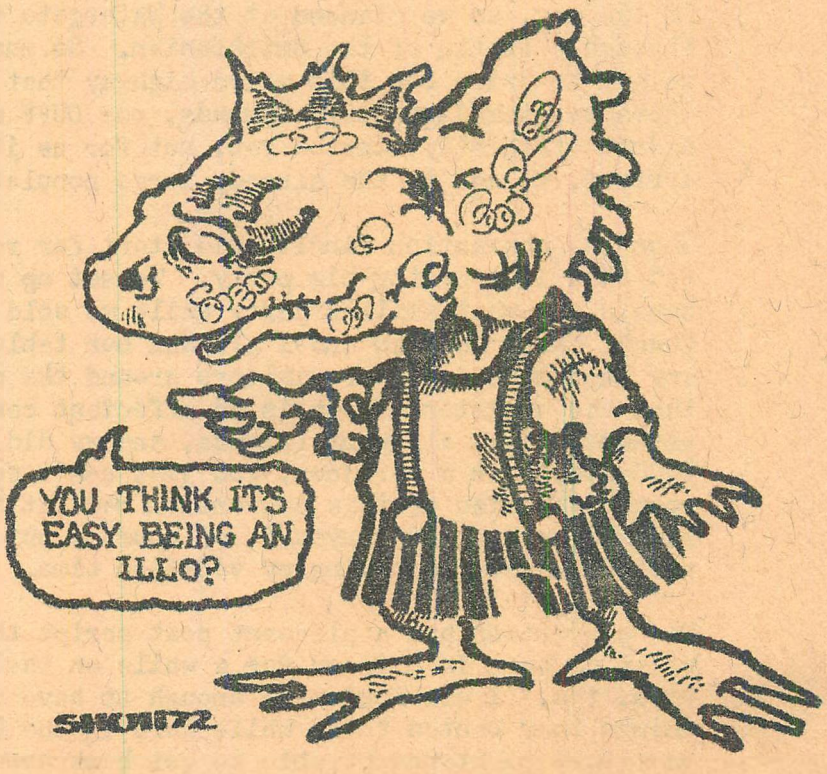


NOTEBOOKLINGS

+ Hank Luttrell +

It doesn't seem like Starling comes out as frequently as it used to. . .I don't know, maybe we are just getting old. . .some of that youthful fannish vigor has drained away. Perhaps from at least one viewpoint it is fortunate that Lesleigh and I don't have enough spare time to get Starling out more often: our fanzine has always lost money. But recent rises in the cost of paper, ink, postage and everything else we need to continue Starling make each issue particularly hard on our budget. Originally, we had planned to have this Starling out before the Worldcon.

DISCON and dat con

Our Worldcon trip this year got off to a good start. Instead of the usual numbing interminable drive, we were able to divide the trip up into two shorter drives, and spend the night with Don & Maggie Thompson (& Valerie, Stephen & the dogs and cats) near Cleveland. We always enjoy visiting with the Thompsons, and this trip we also saw Joe Sanders for the first time. It was certainly a pleasure to finally meet a senior Starling contributor. You should attend a few conventions, Joe. We would have liked to stay longer, but the irresistable lure of of the Discon hovered in the east, so we drove off into the rising sun.

By a fortunate quirk of fate, part of Columbia fandom now lives in a suburb of Washington, DC. So when we arrived in Arlington, VA., we descended upon the apartment of Craig and Terry Hughes and made ourselves comfortable all over their best bedroom. Well, before the convention got started, we had to get the required sight seeing out of the way, so we glanced at the Watergate and a few other monuments, and then wandered through a little of the Smithsonian. So much for Washington, DC. Before the convention, we had to drive out this weird highway that doesn't go anyplace but this dinky airport, where we picked up Leigh Edmonds, our DUFF winner, and Valma Brown. The convention hadn't officially started yet, but for us it definitely had, when Leigh and Valma arrived, to add to the already large population of Falls Church fandom.

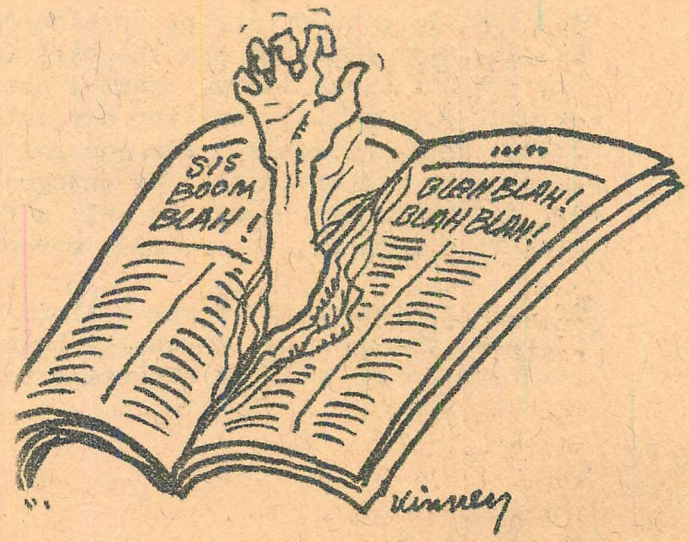
When the convention finally did start for real some 4000 people descended on the hotel, and that is a pretty big party. We set up shop in the hucksters room and arranged to have a somewhat smaller party while we sold recycled paper over the tables. Chris Couch, Jerry Kaufman and I all had our tables together, so even when there weren't any customers or other visitors around the company was pleasant. We have always found that the huckster's room is an effecient central location to locate yourself in and attempt to see all your friends, and we did see and visit with many of you. But with 4000 people at a worldcon, you just can't see everyone, not even in the huckster's room. The size of this convention made it seem more hectic and tiring than any I can remember. I enjoyed myself, of course, but I must admit that there are probably more restful ways of spending my vacation time.

The convention had a pleasant post script this year. Leigh and Valma were able to visit us here in Madison for a while on their way west. And delightful guests they were, too. I was fortunate enough to have a day off while they were here. One of the things they wanted to do while here in the US was shop around for books and magazines that they might not be able to get back home, or that might be cheaper here. Well, Madison's State Street is a good place for that sort of shopping, so we spent most

of the day wandering up and down the street and in and out of all the record and book shops. We bought some books at the Madison Book Co-op, a nice new and used book and magazine shop which offeres a good discount to members. They also have an excellent science fiction section, and regularly sell out their shipments of Alien Critic and Algol. Next, we stopped at Paul's Books, which has a huge selection of used books, including lots of science fiction at half cover price -- which makes their older titles particularly attractive bargains. When we met Lesleigh for lunch, she told us that the University Book Store was having a record sale, so off we went. While Leigh searched through the records -- mostly cheapie classicals and some remaindered pop albums -- Valma and I checked out the rest of the store. Leigh ended up with 3 or 4 records -- at $2 each record buying is relatively painless -- and Valma bought a theatre book which had been on her list of books to look for while in the States. While we were in another paperback/magazine shop, Leigh and Valma passed up a chance to buy an underground comic called "Commies From Mars." I should have insisted that they buy it, or bought it for them, because I think they would have liked Steve Stile's story therein. While looking over the rack of underground comics, Valma asked that age-old question, "If these are underground comics. . .how come they are for sale out here in the open?" All in all, I don't think that Madison book and record merchants will soon forget the shower of traveler's checks that we poured up and down State Street.

We had a party for Leigh and Valma while they were here, of course. Now, there isn't really a "Madison fandom" in the same way that there was a Columbia fandom, as I'm sure some of you have noticed. But, interestingly enough, just before we left for Discon, who should call us up but Steve Johnson, old time APA45 member -- which meant that he was one of the first people that Leigh knew in US fandom. Steve has come to Madison to go to school. At the moment there is at least one other active fanzine publisher in Madison, Richard West, who publishes a Tolkien fanzine. In addition, I might mention that Richard probably has the best funny book collection in town, and is a avid Barks, Stanley and Kelly fan and collector. Also at the party were loyal Starling collators (and, like Richard, funny book fans) Craig Young and Maureen McGinney (I'll call her Demi, I usually do). Craig and Demi also have a better Barks collection than I do, and let me tell you, it is embarrassing to have the third best collection in town. Craig has never made any claim to being a science fiction fan, but his house is stuffed with a fine collection of science fiction paperbacks which he has collected in his long dedicated career of haunting second hand shops. We also invited some of Lesleigh's friends from school.

I enjoyed the party a lot; I think everyone else did, too. We kicked everyone out fairly early, since not only did Lesleigh and I have to get up early the next day, but so did our guests, to catch an early jet. Mostly we made lots of jokes about Kangaroos and wattle and stuff like that. The Real Fans present contributed a certain amount of talk about the mystic order of fandom, just enough to confuse the anthropology students present. Reasonably enough, they wanted to know how Leigh and Valma got to the USA. They had already picked up the hint that there was some sort of mysterious Something (DUFF?) which had put up the money. Fan charities are almost as easy to explain as fanzines or apas.



One evening while they were here, Leigh sat and started making notes to be used when he writes his DUFF reports. I said that I hoped he had been writing down all the terribly clever fannish sayings and jokes that he had been hearing since he got to the US, since that would be the very heart of any good trip report. "Oh, well. . ," Leigh started, and Valma said, "Funny, I don't remember any!" Ha, thats a good one, Valmer!" Leigh said, writing it down. He calls Valma Valmer, for some reason.

While on DUFF related topics, Lesleigh asked me to mention that anyone interested in running in the Down Under Fan Fund race for a trip to the Australian Worldcon (which should be quite a trip; Tucker is going, you know) should get together their nominators and get word to Lesleigh. The deadline is near: November 2, 1974. As soon as possible after that date we'll be getting out the ballots. I can tell you already that I expect it to be an interesting race.

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We've got lots of regional conventions going on all about us, within easy driving range, so it looks like we'll be doing some more conventioning yet this year. We thought several times about going to Minicon, but we have to limit our traveling at some point. So right now it looks like we'll be at the Windycon October 25-27, and then at the Chambanacon in Champaign, Ill., Nov. 29-Dec. 1. I don't think we will be huckstering at the Windycon, which will be a nice change; then we'll probably be behind the table again in Champaign. At either affair, however, you'll be able to pick up a copy of Lesleigh's DUFF report, and by late November you may even be able to vote in the next DUFF race.

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Actually (to continue a subject I first wrote about in the first paragraph), we couldn't have published this issue of Starling until now. Some our contributers took a little longer than they had planned to get their pieces to us. At any rate, we are very happy to have the first Juanita Coulson column in several issues. I suspect one reason that Juanita hasn't been doing as many Starling columns as she used to is that she has been selling lots of books -- which is fine, since books pay for groceries. We can hardly believe it ourselves, but this is actually the second issue in a row with a Jim Turner piece. Jim called us twice long distance to assure us that it would be arriving right away, and sure enough it came in this morning's mail, only a week late and just in time for this issue.

At least one part of the production of this issue has been unusually exciting. That is, when Lesleigh saw the bill for the mimeograph ink I bought recently. No, that's a different story. What I actually meant to tell you about was how involved Lesleigh became while writing her article for this issue, which you'll find is about vintage movie musicals. For several days the cats and I were treated to evening tap dancing performances. We enjoyed them of course, even if an occasional complex step did cause the needle to skip a few groves. But since my needle and tone arm track very lightly, the records weren't scratched.

For some reason we got fewer letters of comment about the last issue than usual. I suppose you were all unusually busy? This is reflected by a somewhat shorter letter column. We'll be expecting to hear from you this time.

HOW TO WRITE SWELL

+ Rick Dey +

How many of us have sat before our writing desks, goosequill in hand, & thought, "Enough of this splashing around in the shallows of amateur writing - no more letters of comment to fanzines, no more in-depth studies of The Justice League of America, no more convention reports - I'm ready to plunge into deep waters - I wanna write a short story!" And then we stare at that white expanse of paper for hours upon end!

After much research & soul-searching, I have concluded that two barriers separate us laymen from the literary priesthood. First, constant exercise of the craft. Second, the ability to plot. Woe unto those who by-pass these areas - a good idea & interesting characters will simply rattle around in their heads like peas in a gourd. Such elements need to be popped into the firm pudding of a solid plot. Nothing else accounts for the enormous production of literary giants such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Edgar Wallace, & Robert Silverberg - they knew how to plot!

But where, I hear you all crying out, do good plot ideas come from? How are they developed? What do you know about it? Well, the solution to this dilemma has been available to all you smart-alecks for years - in the back shelves of used bookstores & libraries. I am now going to reveal to you secrets of life mastery that even the Rosacrucians do not know: that all plots are known, sorted out, catalogued; all awaiting the canny discoverer who need only stack them up like building blocks into the structure of his choice. All the hard work has been done; all that remains is for you - the fledgeling fiction writer - to discover the blueprint of plotting, the Key to Success.

There may be other pretenders to the throne, but the King of Plots is clearly Wycliffe A. Hill, Author-Inventor, author of Ten Million Photoplay Plots (1918), The Art of Dramatic Plot Writing (1921), the Corona Typewriter Company's The Writer's Guide (1925), & finally his masterpiece, The Plot Genie (1931). In his introduction to The Plot Genie, Mr. Hill recounts his years of travail in the Hollywood Dream Factory, & of having a pet story rejected by Cecil B. DeMille because "although an interesting narrative, it contains no dramatic plot." Chastened yet inspired by this insight, Mr. Hill went on to research the art & science of plotting, producing en route the books cited above. His quest culminated finally in two astounding discoveries: First, that he had isolated & catalogued all the basic plots in the world; Second, that "the construction of a story plot is as simple as making & baking a pan of biscuits...when the proper formula is applied to the necessary ingredients."

For those of us softened up & confused by mainstream & new wave writing, The Plot Genie lays on revelation after revelation; for those of us who hunger for the good old stuff once ladled out by E.E. "Doc" Smith, Erle Stanley Gardner, & Sax Rohmer, the book will smooth out all those ruffled feathers. For instance, Mr. Hill reveals that there are only 31 basic dramatic situations. That's it! He pooh-poohs previous scholars who claimed that there were 36, & proves them wrong. Upon this rock is the Plot Genie built.

Perhaps some of you are squirming in your seats & wondering, So what? Discovering the 31 basic plots still doesn't mean that I can sit down & dash off a solid tale that Analog or Playboy will snap up. Well, fret not, because Mr. Hill has not only figured out every basic plot, he has also listed every basic locale, hero & heroine (both usual & unusual), problem, obstacle to love, complication, predicament, & climax or surprise twist. What more could you ask? Well, yes...you might ask How the hell do I sort out which element from each category I need? No problem - & herein lies Mr. Hill's ultimate stroke of genius.

The Plot Genie lists the possibilities in each category by number. For instance, the first list, "Backgrounds or Locale," lists all possible backgrounds numerically from "In Asia (No. 1)" to "At a fraternity house (No. 180)." Unusual Male Characters range from "Exporter," to "Metaphysician." There are so many PROBLEMS Embodying Cause & Effect cluttering up our lives that they must be grouped in six lists of 180 items each, from "Desired fortune opposed by enemies (List 1, No. 1)," to "Desired vengeance against a lawbreaker opposed by distance (List 6, No. 180)." The final wrapup ranges from the hero's making a sacrifice for religion (1) to the victimizer becoming the victim of his own scheme (180). Strangely enough, there seems to be only 180 of everything as far as plot elements go.

Now then, on to the biggest & most critical problem - how to pull it all together. For the solution to this problem, we turn from the text of Wycliffe A. Hill, author, to the inside back cover, where we find the Plot Robot, brainchild of Wycliffe A. Hill, inventor. The cover overlay consists of a confident-looking young man in robe & jammies gazing into an enormous crystal ball that rests before him on a plump cushion. To the other side stands an Aladdin's Lamp with billows of smoke gushing up from it. As it rolls up behind the young man, the smoke resolves itself into a genie, bowing down the way genies do when they make their powers available to those who control them. Behind the overlay, & riveted to the center of the page, is a wheel covered along the rim with random runs of numbers from one to 180. An indentation along the edge of the overlay allows one to rotate the wheel, & numbers are revealed singly through a slotted window cut in the base of the crystal ball. The mechanism of the Plot Robot is simplicity itself - dial a plot! Dial your characters! Dial the works! All one has to do after that is to fill the thing in around the edges a bit, & add a little continuity to tie a few things together.

The procedure is as follows: Sort out all & list all the different plot elements catalogued in the text (each with its 180 possibilities), & then turn the dial three turns for each one. At the last turn, jot down the little number that appears in the magic window on the crystal ball. Go right down the line until you have numbers for all the categories - Locale, Characters, Love Obstacle, Predicament, etc., & then turn back to the appropriate heading & write out the item that matches the number. One particularly firm rule is laid down - don't argue with the genie; work with whatever he picks for you. If you keep dialing until you get something you like - or more probably, something that makes sense - you will have defeated the purpose of The Plot Genie. If the author-to-be dials & dials until the plot elements tie in logically, he will end up with the same tired, run-of-the-mill plot that can only result in yet another rejection slip. That's what Mr. Hill says.

Now before we try our own hand at this, let's watch the master at work. On page 36, Mr. Hill dials a plot & then shows us how to tie it together. First, the plot elements:

LOCALE: Farm
CHARACTER: Publisher
THE BELOVED: Mystic's daughter

PROBLEM: Obliged to recover lost information or clue opposed by distance
LOVE OBSTACLE: Beloved doubts the endurance of the lover.
COMPLICATION: An illicit love affair threatens loss of happiness to a loved one.
PREDICAMENT: Abduction is threatened by parties desiring valuable information.
CRISIS: Learn that a loved one is a murderer
CLIMAX: Wherein the slain or wounded loved one proves to be the enemy in disguise.

Think it can't be done, huh? Well, just watch Wycliffe A. Hill, author-inventor, go to town on this. Here is his synopsis of the story constructed by him from the above mish-mash:

> A magazine publisher has occasion to make a trip into the country and to stop at a farm house. His mission involves the discovery of important information which necessitates his covering a great distance in order to obtain this information. In the meantime he meets and falls in love with the daughter of an old mystic who is also interested in obtaining the same information which he seeks. There is a rift between them, and the situation develops wherein she doubts his endurance, and this is complicated when an illicit love affair threatens to seriously affect her happiness. She is threatened with abduction by enemies who are also concerned with the valuable information which is sought. A murder is committed and the crime is laid at the feet of the publisher. A terrific fight follows in which a man, at first thought to be the hero, is mortally wounded. It later develops, however, that the dying man is the enemy leader who has taken the place of the hero. The valuable information which has been sought is discovered in the meantime, and the hero and heroine are united in happiness.

Mr. Hill then proceeds to smooth out all the wrinkles from this heavily wrinkled plot, & resolves all seeming gaps & contradictions. By page 47 he has it licked (he has added bootleggers, a playboy-aviator, a mind-reading act, & an aerial dogfight), & informs us triumphantly "The foregoing synopsis is just such a one as I have sold to studios." Okay, but is it the one he sold to a studio? I've seen many 1930s films on the Late Show, & I don't recall anything with a plot like this. And a plot like this I'm not likely to forget. Perhaps I dozed off during an early commercial.

According to Mr. Hill, the Plot Genie is suitable for the following markets: (I) Romance Without Melodrama; (II) Action-Adventure stories; (III) Detective-Mystery Stories; (IV) Comedy; (V) True Confession Stories; (VI) Short Short-Stories. Once again, he cautions us "Just because a plot assignment given by the Genie looks impossible or difficult, do not discard it...many(plots) which at first appear to have the least promise actually provide the most interesting and novel story plots." And if the story

just won't jell for markets I through VI, we more up-to-date types can add (VII) Fantasy; (VIII) Science Fiction; & (IX) Comic Books Scripts. Hard to see how an illogical plot could seriously damage a submission to that last market.

Anyway, it's time now to try our hand with this wonderful device, & come up with a story that will make the Slush Pile reader of our target magazine sit up & take notice. Here we go - BACKGROUNDS! Round & round & round she goes, & where she stops, nobody - 170...say, since we're going to look these all up anyway, lets look them up as we go along & eliminate all that distracting suspense. And don't belittle me - you know perfectly well you were planning to skip ahead to see what all the numbers stood for. Now then, background 170 is - In the Bermudas! All right - we're off to a good start - lots of mystery, glamour, romance & action implicit in that locale; now let's see just what kind of hero will deal with it all...No. 8...a male nurse. Geez. Well, how about his beloved? Three turns, and...an adventuress. Well, I've seen thrillers fashioned from even less likely leads. Their problem is..."Obliged to risk happiness in an effort to brave a maniac or insane person." Hot dog! Now we're getting somewhere. Now, what's the Obstacle to their Love?...No. 103: "Beloved falsely accused of being socially unfit." Super! Everything is falling into place already. What's next? Ah - Complication...3 turns around...96, which is..."Fatal indiscretion threatens loss of health to a loved one." Okay, now they have their Predicament..."There is a threatened mutiny." Wait a minute...well, we shouldn't give up as soon as the going gets rough. On to the Crisis..."About to permit an unrecognized father to drown." Well, maybe the Climax will give us a clue to pulling this together...125: "Wherein one who is on the point of disclosing facts which will bring about ruin to the hero, is killed or dies of natural causes."

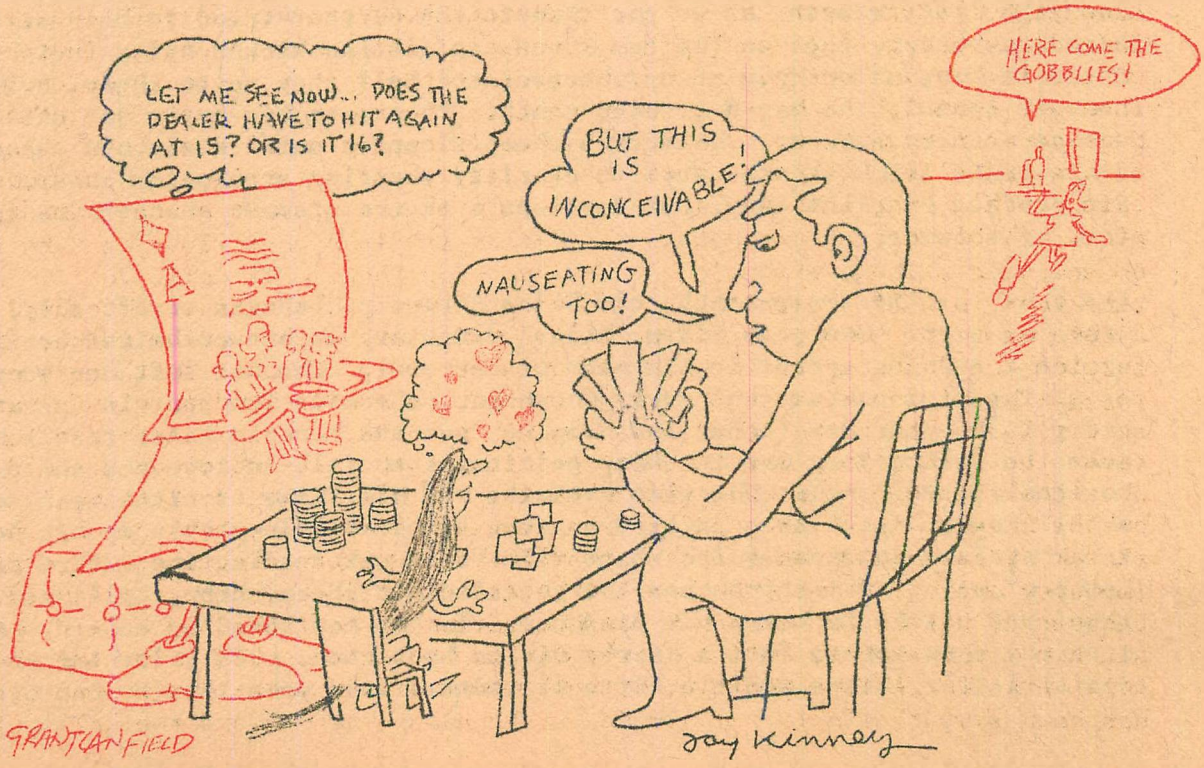
Let me turn off the typer for a few minutes & think this whole thing through...well, can you go for this: a male nurse accompanies his crippled, crazed & wealthy employer to the latter's vacation estate in the Bermudas where he meets his employer's daughter, a spoiled heiress & adventuress, jaded & cynical despite her youth & seemingly unspoiled beauty. Nevertheless, that old chemistry does its traditional stuff when the two meet, & the heiress-adventuress is drawn to the male nurse - especially when she sees him stripped to the waist, sweat gleaming on his superbly muscled, sun-bronzed hide as he labors over her father's flaccid body on the massage table. Of course he introduces her to the good life - fresh air, long walks, tennis, thumb wrestling & buttermilk, & she quickly thrusts her dissolute past & snobbish friends behind her. Then her snobbish father gets wind of the affair & rams about the ground floor of his mansion in a rage, his motorized wheelchair careening wildly about as he rasps orders to his orderlies (this is a role that clearly calls for Lionel Barrymore), & vows certain death to the lackey who dares to love the heiress to a vast laundry detergent empire. The lovers appear before the father to plead their love, but he is adamant - no economic miscegenation in his family. Now then, Hill calls for "Fatal indiscretion threatens loss of health to a loved one." That's a toughie. The loved one picks up a dose of clap? Nope, not fatal enough. How about this - the father fires the nurse, forbids the daughter to see him. & takes her with him on a south seas cruise in his yacht, The Flying Flounder? Dan, the hero, rubs himself down with a can of brown Kiwi shoe polish & ships on board as a lascar deckhand. During a storm off Cape Drool, Dan saves the crazed soap baron's life by hitting the air-brakes on the old codger's wheelchair before it carries him over the lee rail. Unfortunately, Dan is run over by the wheelchair, & the rubber tire leaves a brown skid mark across the deck & a white streak across Dan's face. The ungrateful old geezer screams at the crew to throw this imposter overboard into the shark-infested waters. The crew, already won over to Dan because of his breezy manner & his collection of FANTASTIC FOUR 1-10, refuse to deep-six him & threaten to mutiny if the old man doesn't agree to let the young couple get together. There is a scuffle, & the captain of the yacht falls overboard. Since he has been sympathetic to the old man right along, Dan thinks the hell with him, but his

sweetheart prevails upon him to rescue the old salt. Thanks to a distinctive birthmark revealed on somebody's shoulder, it is revealed that the captain is actually Dan's long-lost father. The crafty industrialist takes the captain into his stateroom, ostensibly to dry the old gentleman out. When alone with him, the old bastard threatens to spill to everyone what he knows of the captain's background if he doesn't help him break up this marriage: he has seen the old skipper prancing about his locked stateroom in women's underwear; instead of nautical entries in the locked captain's log, the old guy has been copying out English translations of the Latin passages from Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis. The captain drags the dastard from his wheelchair & stuffs him out the porthole. His life & his secret are smothered in the briny foam. On deck, Dan & the heroine embrace. He is strangely excited by a glimpse of her petticoat.

I don't know - where would I send a story like that? And would I want to read it myself? Would you? Why don't we make use of the rule of three that seems to run through Mr. Hill's instructions for the Plot Genie, & try another plot. I'll dial & decipher, & then line it up below:

BACKGROUND: In a Dope Den - too much! One more turn - gaah! In a Submarine. Should have known when I was well off.
HERO: Caveman.
HEROINE: Liontamer. Great balls of fire.
PROBLEM: Family revolt threatened by superstition.
OBSTACLE: Lover & Beloved are business rivals.
COMPLICATION: Remorse threatens a sacrifice of achievement by a loved one.
PREDICAMENT: There is a threatened religious upheaval.
CRISIS: Learn that a loved one is a slave to passion or habit.
CLIMAX: Wherein a tragic situation is shown to be merely a huge joke.

That about describes this whole story. Whatever it takes to pull all this together, I haven't got. I'll gamble all on one final turn of the wheel - since everything rides on this go-round, I'll pick what seems to be the best of the three turns in each category unless I come up with an obvious winner. I hope word of this doesn't get



back to Wycliffe A. Hall, Author-Inventor. Here goes:

BACKGROUND: On the Riviera. In a bank. On a sheep ranch. I'll bet the works on the sheep ranch.
HERO: A barber; a jazz orchestra leader; a bell boy. What choice do I have? A barber it is.
THE BELOVED: she's a...telephone operator...a dope addict's daughter, or...a night club hostess. I think I'll pass on this one until I see what develops. And now it's Problem time.
PROBLEM: Desired liberty opposed by duty to loved ones - not bad. Desired fame opposed by inclement weather. Good grief...one last turn...63: Obliged to risk friendship in an effort to brave a maniac or an insane person. Might as well stay with the last one.
OBSTACLES TO LOVE: between the barber and...a dope addict's daughter - what the hell, why not? The obstacle can be: the match is opposed by children...Lover falsely accused of being mentally unfit...there is a great mental difference between the lovers. Well, the last one tempts me, but the middle one makes sense, considering that the beloved is a junkie's daughter.
COMPLICATION: Revenge is sought against an immortal for having brought loss of fame. What?!? Fatal ambition threatens to deprive one of relief. From what? Remorse threatens a sacrifice of position by a loved one. Saved by the final turn of the wheel.
PREDICAMENT: Madness or mental derangement threatens loss of loved one. That sounds fine right there.
CRISIS: Disaster is threatened by mutiny. On a sheep ranch? About to slay a sister who is unrecognized. Hmmm. There is a threatened religious upheaval. No way. I'll go with the mutiny.
CLIMAX: (we're in the home stretch, now.) Wherein a revenge to be perpetrated is so horrible that it enmeshes the enemy. That's good. Wherein a dog or other animal (how about a sheep?) unexpectedly comes to the rescue. Terrific!! Wherein one who has appeared to be a cripple or hunchback or otherwise deformed proves to be a normal person in makeup - what a finish!!! I ought to use all three.

Well, what kind of tapestry can we weave with threads such as these. Let's just tear down the list, weaving as we go: Due to the current trend in hair styles, Sam, a bankrupt barber, goes on the bum & ends up getting kicked off a freight train somewhere in Montana or Wyoming or wherever the hell they raise sheep, drifts to the nearest spread, the Bar-B-Q sheep ranch. Thanks to his prior job skills, he lands a job as a sheep shearer. He shears sheep sloppily until a sly old sheep shearer shows Sam certain slick strokes sure to simplify shearing struggling sheep. Sure enough, Sam catches on right away, but develops a severe stammer whenever he tries to explain this to someone.

The owner of the sheep ranch, old Silas Sheepdip, behaves erratically, but seems a likeable sort. Sam sees Selma, Silas' daughter, an auburn-haired beauty who has ' ' sealed a searing secret in the seam of her soul. She has left her lucrative position as a nightclub hostess in nearby Moose Ear, a famous fun spot in upstate Montana, in order to be near her father and help him run the ranch. Later that summer, while Selma is instructing Sam in sheep gelding, they fall in love and she promotes him to foreman of the ranch. She also explains why old Silas is often seen scuttling about on all fours, naked as a jaybird & going bibble-bibble-bibble on his lower lip; he is a hopeless laudanum maniac whose vile habit was leading the entire family to the brink of ruin. Sam approaches the grizzled old sheep baron, tells him to lay off the sauce and offers to marry his daughter. He has now saved up enough money to open up a barber shop across from a nearby Marine boot camp. Old Silas informs him that the entire family labors under a curse of madness laid upon them by Red Cloud's medicine

man. Besides, sane or crazy, he'd never allow the heiress to a vast sheep empire to marry a mere barber.

Sam pooh-poohs the family curse angle, but is crushed by the social rebuff. Selma, however, tells him that love will conquer all and arranges to elope with him at high tide. The old geezer learns of their plan through a false friend, downs a dipperful of laudanum, and vows death before dishonor - for his daughter, that is. The love-birds flee, but pause to camp upwind of the main sheep herd while they discuss their plans and bill & coo over a bait of beans & mutton. Meanwhile, the crazed old dip steals up on them with a full complement of ranch hands & attempts to stampede the sheep over them while they are trapped in a sleeping bag with a rusted zipper. The hands, good men all, refuse to participate in this dastardly deed & the old man rides down on the herd himself. Coked to the gills, he falls from his mount & is trampled to death in the stampede he has started. Meanwhile, Shep, Sam's sheepdog, sees the situation and runs to the rescue, gripping the sleeping bag in his doughty jaws & dragging the hapless couple to safety. Quasimodo, the loveable old hunchbacked sheep shearer, oils the zipper & frees the young couple. Sam pulls the zipper back up.

Quasimodo removes his reeking sheepskins & doffs a strange leather harness that gave him the appearance of a crippled hunchback. He stands revealed as either a normal person in makeup, or a demented pervert. No one seems to care either way.

The lovers are wed, & a wild rumpus begins, after which Sam takes on the management of the sheep ranch and looks after Selma, who develops the vexing habit of running off bare naked with a lobo sheep every full moon.

Well, there you have it - two out of three stories fleshed out in full outline, using the full range of the ingenious Plot Genie. Strangely, story three seems to read strangely like story one, although the plot elements seem poles apart. Initially, I considered sending the first story to ATLANTIC MONTHLY, but now the only magazine that suggests itself to me is SPICY SEA STORIES. I thought at first that the third story would be a shoo-in for PLAYBOY, but now I'm inclined to fill in the continuity and send it off to RANCH ROMANCES. One thing bothers me, though. I have hopes of using the PLOT GENIE to manufacture science fiction stories that will guide the field back to that good old sense of wonder, wholesome, solid characterization and plot, but no matter how wild & vaulting the concept I attempt to inject into these good old plots, it seems flat and tame by comparisom. Right now I'm working on this clever & original story about a drawbridge tender & lady cotton picker (#151) thrown together by chance on an Earth-to-Venus shuttle when suddenly the ship is boarded by space pirates. Subsequent events reveal the drawbridge tender to be in actuality a commander in the Galactic Federation assigned to ferret out the home base of the pirates. Later, marooned by the pirates on the planetoid Matzo, the lovers fight for their lives against the dread Snarlizoids. Meanwhile, back at Fedaration head-quarters. . .

Strange - my typewriter seems to have fallen asleep.

# # #

WITH MALICE TOWARD ALL

+ Joe Sanders +

SOLOMON KANE by Robert E. Howard. Centaur, $1.25.

THE GINGER STAR by Leigh Brackett. Ballantine, $1.25.

CAGE A MAN by F. M. Busby. Signet, 95¢.

URSUS OF ULTIMA THULE by Avram Davidson. Avon, 95¢.

SLEEPING BEAUTY by Ross Macdonald. Bantam, $1.50.

COMMUNE 2000 A.D. by Mack Reynolds. Bantam, 95¢.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE by Barry N. Malzberg. Pocket Books, 95¢.

Sometimes, for one reason or another, no one book or set of books in a period of reading stands out enough to serve as the basis for one of these columns. There's just not enough to say about the things. Here are several such books.

I've discussed adventure fiction recently; I enjoy several series. Unfortunately, even the best writers are uneven. Even Robert E. Howard, whose Conan stories are pretty reliable -- if indistinguishable -- reading, turned out some pretty dull junk. SOLOMON KANE preserves some of it. Especially in the second story, "Red Shadows," Howard's only solution when one pulp cliche starts creaking too loudly is to drag in two or three more cliches. It's a painful book to read, only slightly less boring than a deCamp/Carter pastiche.

Brackett, on the contrary, is adept at finding some life, some purpose, in cliches. THE GINGER STAR is a remarkable job of making space opera look alive and intelligent. Still, there's a faint odor of decay about it. . . Why, for example, preserve the old PLANET STORIES nonsense about Stark's origin; as a wee lad raised by abos on Mercury. But such questions are irrelevant in the book's terms. You've got to take it or leave it. I'll take it, but hitching up my suspension of disbelief and squinting hard.

CAGE A MAN has its share of cliches too, but Busby's first novel (or half a novel, really, since the story breaks off unfinished) works because the action drives right along. When Barton is trying to escape from an alien planet, for example, and just happens to kidnap the kid of the high poobah in charge of spaceships, Busby doesn't even bother to try facing the reader down. The action races on, into a fascinating sequence with Barton learning to steer a ship. I like the book, and I'll be looking for the next one, to find out where the story's going.

In URSUS OF ULTIMA THULE, Davidson is trying something rather interesting. The story drifts in and out of focus, weaving from concise vivid description into an impressionistic mist. On the plus side, Davidson gets some striking effects and discovers some freshness in the sword and sorcery formula. On the minus side, the story is hard

to follow; it has a way of drifting out of focus in key scenes. The overall effect is rather blah. And Davidson's past record gives no promise that the story will be completed in other books.

SLEEPING BEAUTY is Ross Macdonald's latest version of his one idea: how parents victimize their children to madness or death. He employs a great deal of social commentary, literary symbolism, and just plain good straightforward writing. But I hope Macdonald finally realizes that he's said what he wants to say -- that he had several years ago, in fact -- and either works some changes on his theme or shuts up.

Turning away from the action-oriented books, consider COMMUNE 2000 A.D. And it certainly is different from the action-oriented books. Apparently, Reynolds has been sitting and thinking deep thoughts for the past few years, and now he is ready to share his ideas. All of them. Unfortunately, in the time off from writing he seems to have forgotten how to write a novel. The plot here is a mechanical contrivance, serving only to get Reynold's hero from one interviewee to another, so he can sit and listen. For all its interesting ideas, the story crawls along, never really trying to get up and go somewhere. But one can't really criticize the hero for his utter blandness. He is, reversing the usual roles of man and machine, no more than an extension of his tape recorder.

Finally, THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE. Perhaps that is worth a column in itself, or perhaps an overall survey of Malzberg's work and reputation would be interesting. For the present, I'll say merely that Malzberg's writing sometimes jars me to painfully intense awareness. However, my dentist can produce a similar reaction. At times Malzberg produces really vivid effects. But he also is capable of mangled images like one description of a corpse as "fallen in upon itself like a smashed balloon" (p. 103). Writing like this makes me wonder: If Barry Malzberg and J.J. Pierce really are two separate and distinct people, why have they never been photographed together?

words from READERS

Harry Warner, 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

This is most odd. Apparently one of the last locs I wrote before taking up fan history work was to Starling. Now just last week I finished the first draft and a new Starling has arrived. Since I frequently get into ruts, I might as well start a new one by writing a loc on this issue.

+As a matter of fact, we've had a letter of comment from Harry Warner in almost +every issue of Starling since the second. We were particularly pleased to hear +from you while you were so busy with your fan history. -HL

I wish I could have heard the Minicon panel on fannish myths. It could have come in handy, because I've been thinking of calling the new fan history manuscript A Wealth of Fable, a phrase borrowed from something Berry once wrote about Willis and swiped previously for my Willis biography in Warhoon. The more I worked on the history of the 1950's, the more I realized it was a time for legend-making, both out of the whole cloth in such projects as the Hoffman-Bulmer steam enterprises, and from real people and events, like the semi-mythical status that Oblique House gradually assumed. My other conclusion from the experience of doing the first draft was that it was perhaps the happiest decade fandom has ever had. People didn't seem to take their disputes as seriously as they did before and later, there weren't things like the Depression, World War Two, and Vietnam to impose mundane bad vibrations on fans, and that's another fable-like angle to the decade.

It's sobering to think that the "story behind the story" anecdotes which Thrilling Wonder Stories once relegated to a little department hidden somewhere at the back of the magazine now occupy an honored position in a scholarly volume intended to help more people write science fiction. Maybe the best attitude to take toward a book like Those Who Can, the Clarion workshops, and other instructional endeavors is a stubborn clinging to the fact that different potential writers react differently to outside help. This book will probably help some people to write marketable science fiction who would have been frightened into literary impotence by attending Clarion, and the book should be useless to some people who need the pressure and violence of a Clarion to be prodded into real creativity. I'm afraid that some good writers will be lost before they get started, if they don't try more than one kind of learning experience.

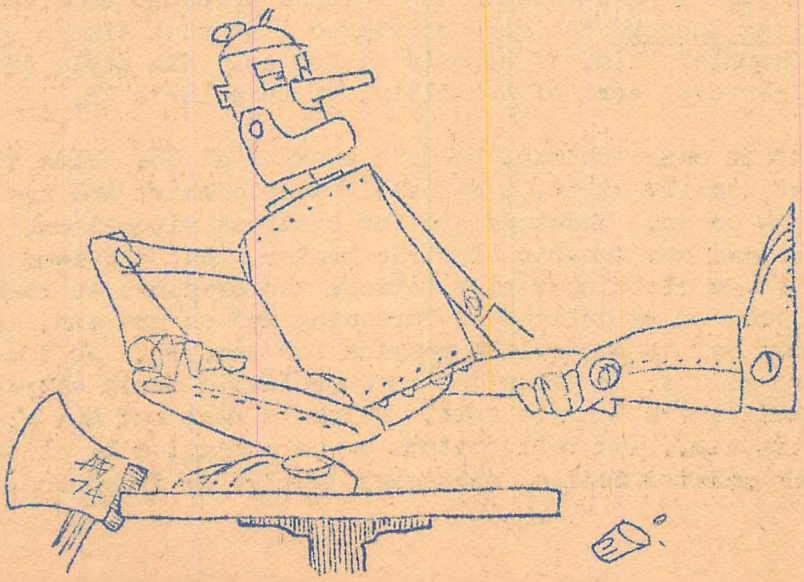
Al Sirois, 233 County St., New Haven, Conn. 06511

Joe Sanders piece on the Those Who Can volume was very interesting from a number of standpoints. I tend to agree with him on just about every point. It seems that nearly every time someone sits down to discuss the teaching of writing, he or she wonders, at one point, "Can creative writing be taught?" Well, we all have our opinions on this. Mine is to the effect that one can learn enough to perhaps nail down a bit of crafting (i.e., sentence structure, how to construct a workable plot, how to build a

character, how to aim the narrative flow), but no one will ever be able to teach a writer how to breathe life into his creations. I'd hazard the guess that a lot of hacks know their craft quite well; Kenneth Bulmer, for instance, or Anvil, or Rackham, or anyone else, but about all they are are really capable of is this not-life type of writing. The intuitive insight is lacking, such as pervades the works of Delany or Lafferty or Russ or (ah ha!) Lupoff. Lots of times, I suppose, the spark is there, deep down, but dies after a while because the writer has learned the craft improperly. I've gotten into arguements about this question of craft vs. art. I'm a strong believer that unless a writer knows his craft, he will have a very difficult time succeeding to art; it's like trying to paint a picture with no canvas or brushes.

Douglas Barbour, 10808 - 75th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6E 1K2

i found Those Who Can a joy, and very helpful, though not, as Joe Sanders points out, to neophyte writers necessarily, or at least not on a practical level. i think delany's piece is a gem, tho, & helpful in that it shows how writing happens. the others, many of them, are about their topics, & do help readers, especially readers who haven't thought about such topics very much, to see just how things like theme or point of view work in a story. on the whole the stories are good, too, which certainly helps in an anthology. what i want to talk about though is the whole question of teaching writing. no, you can't 'teach' it, but people can learn about it faster in certain settings than in others (at least many people can). like they can learn more about their own errors & how to correct them in a creative writing class or clarion situation than they can locked up in a garrett. because their conferees (not necessarily the 'teacher') will point them out to them. when you fail to communicate what you want to communicate & you get that feedback info right away, you can pick up on how to improve the situation. i run poetry creative writing classes, & i hope not to have to say much at all during them. optimum conditions are when the other students have said enough about a particular piece of work that i don't have to say anything. because you are getting it from your peers, you listen, & it means more, because you're able to give it to them too. you can often spot errors of judgement in another's work you can't spot in your own, but after a while, you begin to pick them out in your own work because you just sort of know that X is going to slam down hard on that line for this particular reason. so the class works, in its own way, to get you through about five to ten years of slow learning from mistakes in a year or two. that's if you're willing to listen & learn from what others say about your work. no, the book can't help, but i think giving it to people who are writing wouldn't hurt at all. a bit of theory doesn't hurt, provided the practical criticism of the immediate work done is



also a happening thing week in and week out.

Michael Carlson , 915 Cathedral St.,
Baltimore, MD 21201

Really enjoyed Joe Sanders' column this time out. He is right, i think, about series heros. . .we very definitely don't want them mired down in the types of lives which we find ourselves. Escape literature must provide escape.

Barry Gillam and i seem to be at odds almost constantly about everything filmic, and it runs deeper than a mere difference in taste. At the same time i find many of his articles interesting, especially because we draw on the same sources. His piece on Disney strikes me as being much like mine in the same issue of Starling -- helpful if you're unexposed to the material discussed. I remember "Der Fuehrer's Face" quite well. . .Donald wakes up and has eau'd'bacon, from an atomizer for breakfast. I also remember a Daffy Duck, Duck Tracy cartoon which seems like it was from the same time. Daffy always appealed to me more than Donald.

I do resent Barry's passing off Fantasia as a "cold, lumpy cultural stew." It is lumpy, and it is somewhat of a cultural stew, but it it hardly cold. Except, perhaps, the Greek Mythmess they present.

The Disney feature films of the 50s, even the ones made from TV shows (Davy Crockett, Swamp Fox or whatever) are still among my favorites. Those films really attacked a child's emotions and imagination. I wonder what caused the change to the bland and sick "family entertainment" stuff -- Moochie, Flubber, and all that shit. What 6 year old kid can avoid being reduced to tears by Old Yeller? What 12 year old wouldn't sign up for 4 years in the Action Army after Johnny Tremaine? And remember Patrick McGoohan as the Scarecrow of Romney Marsh?

Leigh Brackett's letter is most helpful; my guesses about who did what on The Big Sleep were off mostly because i hadn't a good idea of where she fit in, and it's good to finally know for sure. Her ability to script a detective film all by herself cannot be doubted, although i again assume that Altman probably made changes. The more i think about The Long Goodbye the more convinced i am that Altman would do a tremendous "straight" Chandler film, if he only wanted to. His style fits very naturally the craziness, the perverse sort of hostility, of Chandler's LA.

Susan Wood, barefoot in Saskatchewan, needs a sweater at 68. When i'm home at my folks house, which is kept usually at 66, i generally wear a shirt and try to turn the thermostat down to 64 or so. Sweaters are for heatless situations, like the one room flat with cold water and one two-bar electric heater, that a friend and i shared in London's winter. My own clothing varies between the pressure to look reasonably respectable for my job and my delight at "dressing up" on one end, and my distaste for most modern "fashion" and my Susan-like passion for comfort. So i wear my grandfather's work pants and loose shirts; or jeans and an embroidered denim shirt; or basic pants and tie; or my grandfather's 3 piece suit. Which is neat but has pleated pants. Double breasts, knits etc., and bell bottoms or huge baggies or platform shoes turn me off; as does does painted bodies, excessive jewelry or fragrence, or tattoos.

You've got to learn to live with your body in some sort of harmony; and to jump at any chance to mutilate, disguise, paint or otherwise hide it away seems to me to be sort of sad.

Barry Gillam, 4283 Katonah Ave., Bronx, NY 10470

I suppose everyone has written to comment on Leigh Brackett's informative letter; Her explanations of what was dropped from her screenplay and why are interesting. Because the movie as it is has no story whatsoever. That doesn't keep it from being a very entertaining film. But its values are Altman's and Gould's. It is the definitive crazy private eye movie: All the cliches turned inside out and none of the dull linking stuff known as plot.

As Miss Brackett has probably realized by now, Evelyn Brent's memorable performance as "Feathers" in Underworld was directed by Josef von Sternberg -- not Hawks. She may have mixed it up with Hawks' Scarface, since both derive from Ben Hecht and both deal in Germanic shadows and fateful women.

I finally caught up with Robin Hood in the Disney summer series. And regretted every minute of it. It is an absolutely dreadful film, with lackluster writing, characterization and animation. The very idea of Robin Hood told as a country/western tale is ludicrous. The only appealing characters are the rabbits and mice lifted from earlier Disney films. And dividing the story into such huge independent units (The Robbery of King John, The Archery Tournament, The Debtors Prison Break) results not in extended tours de force but in interminable lingering on static scenes.

The color is totally wasted. Oh, some of the backgrounds for the rainy day/debtors prison sequence are nice. There is one astounding shot of the bell ringing over Friar Tuck's empty church. And what's astounding is that it could have been live action. In which case animation is pointless.

Don D'Ammassa, 19 Angell Dr., E. Prov., RI 02914

Michael Carlson's article on Sjowall and Wahloo overlooked one factor which might well contribute to the series' success in this country. Not only is the detail of how a police department works interesting, the details of life in the background country are novel enough to hold the reader's attention. Much of the value of Arthur Upfield's detective series is in his portrayal of life in Australia, and Nicholas Freeling's Inspector Van Der Valk stories, while inferior as mysteries to Martin Beck, are every bit as rich in local color.

I recall reading at one time that Richard Stark was a penname for Ed McBain/Evan Hunter/Hunt Collins/S.A. Lombino. In your letter column, Michael Carlson indicates it is penname for Donald Westlake. Since I know Westlake is not McBain et al, it appears that one of us has an unreliable source.

Rick Stooker, 1205 Logan St., Alton, Il 62002

So far nobody has mentioned the man who is probably the best modern crime novelist, Stanley Ellin. His first story, "Specialty of the House," is already a classic. He took a typical Rod Serling plot and added everything Serling lacks, subtlety, characterization, suspense, and depth. He's not prolific, as mystery writers go. In the last 25 years he's published nine novels and two short story collections. He's won at least five Edgars. His latest novel, Mirror, Mirror on the Wall is the most unconventional

mystery I've read. It breaks nearly every rule of the genre, but fairly. It has the same solution as that of a famous classic (no, I'm not telling which one), but pulls it off better.

I object to The Long Goodbye in its approach to Chandler, Marlowe and the detective genre in general. In an interview in a film magazine, Altman said he passed around a copy of Raymond Chandler Speaking to every member of the cast. He did this, he said, to impress upon them Chandler's obsession with suicide. I recently read that book, and wonder if Altman got an entirely different edition than I read. The book is divided into many different subjects, and is made up of excerpts from Chandler's letters about writing, Hollywood, etc. Most contain no reference to suicide whatsoever. The subject comes up in "Chandler on Chandler" in letters from the midfifties on. It was about that time that Chandler's wife died. But it was hardly a motif of his whole life, and when he died a natural death in '59 he was at work on a new Marlowe novel, and looking forward to more after that.

Altman said that people who said Gould was not Marlowe were merely saying that Gould was not Bogart, Montgomery or someone else who had portrayed him. This may be true of some who haven't read the books, but not of me. Gould is not Marlowe, pure and simple. Neither he nor Altman betray the slightest insight into the character they are purporting to put upon the screen. Marlowe was a romantic fantasy character, by Chandler's admission. He was a cynical, hard drinking white knight. He was a tough guy who worked chess problems in his spare time. He helped anyone he felt deserved help, and rarely collected his low fee. He was chronically poor, but, unlike the police who often harassed him, he owned his own soul. He was not cowed by a badge or a gun in the hand of a mobster's bully boy. He took his knocks and asked only that he be allowed to carry out a job to his satisfaction.

Altman interpreted this to mean that Marlowe was an idealistic fool, out of place in the seventies. He put on the screen a shambling jerk who couldn't trick his own cat. He was an anachronism in the seventies. He was an invalidated period-piece who couldn't fit into the modern world of nudity, yoga and yogurt, symbolized by the girls on the balcony. How many decades does nudity really date back to in southern California? I know that Swami Vivikananda was giving lectures and making converts to Vedanta in that area around the turn of the century. And Gloria Swanson was practicing yoga before many of us were born. But a private detective who, in the forties, knew the smell of marijuana and moved around in all segments of society, would be disconcerted by nudity and yoga if he were suddenly transported into the seventies. Of Course.

I do agree, however, that putting Marlowe into the seventies was a more valid choice than making a fifties period piece. It's the approach that I disagree with.

I have just finished reading the entire Martin Beck series to date, and am confirmed in my opinion they're some of the best mysteries written. The later ones in the series tend to work not only on a mystery/detection level, but as social comment on the deterioration of Sweden also. If done clumsily, it would of course ruin the books. But the authors make the 'relevency' an integral part of the plot, unraveling a crime. As Martin Beck investigates the murders in Murder at the Savoy and The Abominable Man it becomes increasingly clear that the greatest criminals in the books were the victims, and not their killers.

My reaction to Leigh Brackett's letter? She didn't answer the question I'm most concerned with: who's idea was it to have Marlowe kill that guy, her's or Altman's?

Jeff Kipper, 336 Forest St., Oakland, CA 94618

The John Stanley article in Starling 26 was a pleasant glance at an artist whom much more could be written about. His career went from good in the 40's through excellence in the 50's to obscurity in the 70's. Where is he now? Stanley's 50's style grew more inwardly complex. I am speaking of his characterization, variety of characters, and his vocabulary of facial expressions.

Stanley's abbreviated, "child like" art style seems a contradiction to his fatalistically bizarre stories. And along with E. C. Segar and Barks Stanley's often satirical writing strikes me as the cream.

Fred Patten, 11863 West Jefferson Blvd., Apt 1, Culver City, CA 90230

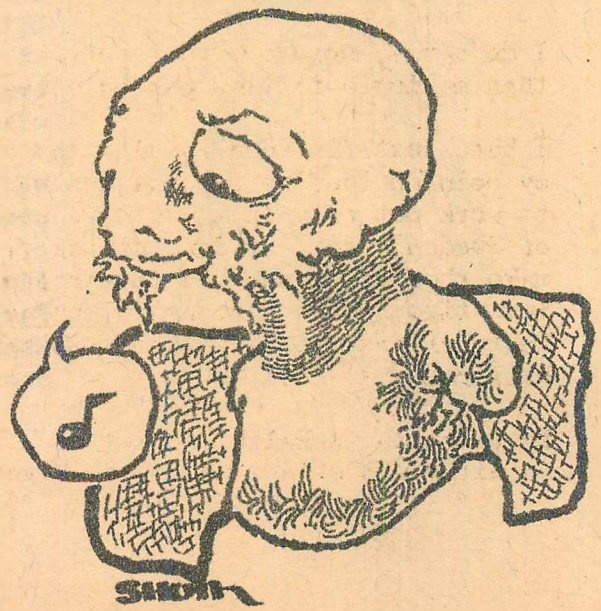
Having been in comics fandom for about ten years now, and having been inundated in costumed-hero amateur scholarship, it's nice to see the funny animals come into their own at last. Those are what really reached into the depths of nostalgia for me; I learned to read from Walt Disney's Comic & Stories (and the LA Times' comic strips) at age 4 or 5, and I remember my father buying me an issue of Animal Comics when we went to the hospital when my youngest sister was born, when I was 6 1/2. All this predates the costumed-heroes for me by several years. Barks and Kelly have their enthusiasts in comics fandom today, but it's about time somebody started paying a little attention to Mayer, Noonan, et al. And how about John Davis, of Real Screen Comics ("The Fox and the Crow")?

Steve Grant's "The McDuck Papers" is very much like Richard Schickel's The Disney Version in their analyses of the reality behind the public image; ie, both contain so many errors of fact that the plausibility of the author's entire thesis crumbles. Donald's sister was named Dumbella, not Della; Grant's account, to my mind, shows Daisy Duck as being incompatibly emotionally frail when measured against the Daisy Duck who appears in 25 years' worth of Barks' stories. A nice try, but it doesn't hang together.

Don Markstein, P.O. Box 53112, New Orleans, LA 70153

I would really like to believe that Huey, Dewey and Louie are the offspring of Gladstone Gander and Daisy Duck. In fact, I'd like to believe it so much that I actually suspended my disbelief and enjoyed Steve Grant's article -- until I got to the paragraph, where he says, "All of this information correlates with the official Barks biography of the ducks." Sorry, but it ain't so.

Right there in the beginning, he says, "In the early 1900s, Scrooge's brother and sister immigrated to America, but Scrooge was left behind due to his youth." His youth? He was in his 40's! Scrooge was very definitely born between 1860 and 1868, with my best guess being '64. And he came to America long before the early 1900s. He was here during the 1880s, certainly, and was in Alaska during 1898 -- Glittering Goldie is too important a character from his past for us to believe otherwise.

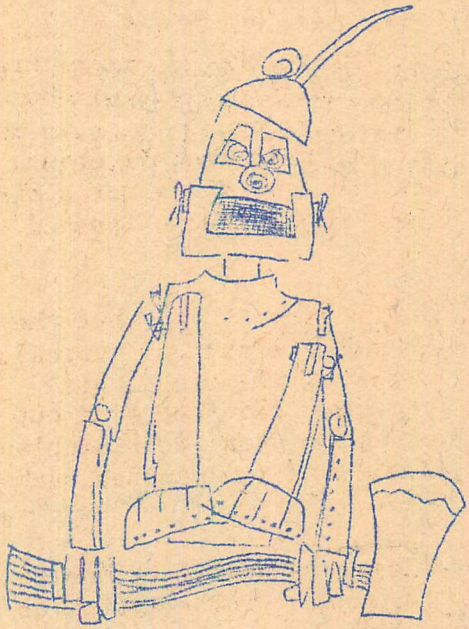


It was probably in the nineteen-aughts that he settled in what is now suburban Duckburg --

the city itself was much smaller in area then and seemed very far away, although his recollection that "There was nothing within 50 miles but a fort on the Tulebug River" must be partially dismissed as an exaggeration. Duckburg was definitely there -- it had been quite a number of years since Cornelius Coot had piped the moutain water in.

If you're wondering how Scrooge could be so active in the 1950's and 60's, even though he'd been born in 1864. . .perhaps you'll recall the tale where he and the nephews discovered the fountain of youth. This also explains why the triplets, who are obviously adults and are, in fact, more mature than their uncle, looked like kids.

Lesleigh's article was nice. Those that I don't have collections of, I at least remember from when I first read them. I do want to register a quibble, though, about the location of Duckburg. I don't happen to have a copy of the issue where you wrote about it in detail, but you do indicate that it's located on the West Coast of the United States. I doubt it very seriously. This is not to say that I can pinpoint the location of Duckburg myself with any great accuracy. Certainly, in many stories, it looks a lot like Los Angeles. But they get heavy snowstorms in the winter. In the fall, they get hurricanes -- or at least, they've gotten at least one hurricane (not counting storms whipped up by Magica deSpell). They're within easy driving distance of both mountains and deserts -- and yet, Dismal Swamp is only 100 miles away. It's fairly certain that Duckburg is not a United States city. They appear to speak English, since the ducks get along fairly well when they go abroad to English-speaking nations, and I refuse to believe that Donald Duck is bilingual. But when they get into trouble abroad, it's the Duckburgian embassy they go to, not the Washington one. Duckburg is obviously the capital of a sovereign nation. What nation? There's only one indication that I've ever found. In "The Gilded Man" a letter is forwarded to "Duckburg, Calisota." So at least we know the name of this nation, even if its location is difficult to pin down. It has a border with Mexico, if that helps any, and it also appears to have a border with the U.S. Beyond that, the weather and the terrain have me stumped. Let's just say that it straddles the mighty Tulebug River and let it go at that.



Jerry Kaufman, 622 W. 114th St., Apt. 52A, NY, NY 10025

I think I liked Ray Nelson's response to my article the best, even though the Tao makes him do some pretty peculiar things. I'd say that my own conception of the Tao is about like his, now. (It, and I, shift around frequently. For the truly passive Taoist, take Eli Cohen. Actually, Eli pushes the Tao around a lot at that. . .if the Tao is a river flowing, then Eli tries to work it so he can sleep in the river bed without getting wet.)

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Eric Lindsay ("I enjoyed Tucker's piece, and hope that the Tucker Fund works so the rest of Australian fandom can meet him. We even found some Jim Beam. . ."), Bill Merrell, Irwin Gaines, Ross Pavlac, Pete Colley, Murray Moore, Bruce D. Arthurs, Hank Jewell, Neal Wilgus, Denis Quane, Paul Anderson, Sheryl Birkhead, Alan Sandercock, John Robinson.

WE'RE IN THE MUSIC

+ Lesleigh Luttrell +

Not long ago, Hank and I went to see That's Entertainment, MGM's attempt to pat themselves on the back for having made some good movies in the past. As we were going into the theater, we heard one of the crowd coming out from an earlier showing say, "They don't make movies like that anymore," (an original remark.) But, no they don't. MGM was never that good at it though.

Well MGM tried. They had the stars; Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, Judy Garland. And they were willing to spend money. So they came up with a few good movies. The Wizard of Oz for example. Certainly that is a classic example of a movie where everything worked. Ray Bolger, Jack Haley, Bert Lahr, Margaret Hamilton and Billy Burke all seem perfect in their roles. Judy Garland is perhaps not quite the Dorothy Frank Baum created, but she did a good job with it. (Much better than Shirley Temple would have done had MGM gotten her for the role as they wanted to -- it's horrible to think of what a goody-goody, ever-so-cute, Dorothy they would have made her in to. On the other hand, in the alternate universe where Shirley Temple got the part of Dorothy, W. C. Fields was probably available for the role of the wizard. Watching Fields steal scenes from Temple, as he had stolen them from Freddie Bartholomew in David Copperfield, would have been almost worth it.)

Other of MGM's musical worked to some extent. But you can't make a good musical on the basis of a few good stars. On the contrary, you can make a good musical with no really good stars at all. Because musicals are basically escapist, and they're basically silly. MGM started off all right, with the Hollywood Revue of 1929, one of their first talkies. The movie was, as the title implies, merely a series of acts, introduced by Jack Benny and featuring some of the top stars of that day (or of any other day, for that matter), such as Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton, Lionel Barrymore and Marie Dressler. The musical numbers include Ukulele Ike's rendition of "Singin' in the Rain" (MGM's theme song) and "Lon Chaney Will Get You If You Don't Watch Out." The latter number featured a group of scantily clad women listening to the bed time threat of the song title and then being accosted by a lot of horrible figures (one of whom might have been Lon Chaney) in their sleep. Since the movie is a revue, there is no plot between the musical numbers. And the numbers are what musicals are all about. But movies aren't the Ziegfield follies and movie audiences had come to expect plots. So shortly after making Hollywood Revue, the mantle of 'the musical studio' passed from MGM to Warner Brothers.

Of course, Warners had introduced music to the screen with The Jazz Singer, but they didn't really get into stride until the 30s when they produced a series of musicals beginning in 1933 with 42nd Street. This is the classic story of the chorus girl who goes on when the leading lady is taken ill on opening night. "You're going out a youngster. But you've got to come back a star!" Of course the story is ridiculous -- especially the idea that Ruby Keeler could learn her lines in a few minutes back stage and then go on and be terrific. But it's a great movie.

42nd Street features the first of the many musical love affairs between Ruby Keeler and Dick Powell. But that's easy to ignore in the midst of the musical numbers such as "42nd Street" (which features crowds of people tapdancing down that particular avenue) and the great "Shuffle Off to Buffalo." The latter number is particularly amusing, especially the cynical chorus sung by Ginger Rogers and the other chorus girls:

"When she knows as much as we know, // She'll be on her way to Reno
While he still has dough. // She'll give him the shuffle when they're back from Buffalo."

42nd Street was followed shortly by the movie most people think of when they think of 30s musicals, Gold Diggers of 1933. The movie starts off with a musical number, instead of first forcing the audience to sit through interminable minute of plot, as Ginger Rogers and chorus sing "We're in the Money." This is followed by one of the most ridiculous plots ever put into a musical. Dick Powell plays a rich young man who disguises his identity when he goes to the big city to sell his songs, because his family does not approve of his musical talent(?). He manages to sell the music for a show to a producer with the help of his show girl friends, Ruby Keeler, Joan Blondell and Alice Macmahon as Trixie (although he has to 'mysteriously' come up with the money to back the show.) When Powell's older brother finds out what he's done, the brother decides to try and buy off Keeler, thinking she has muddled Powell's thinking. But he mistakes Blondell for Keeler and complications follow as Blondell seduces him, Trixie enraptures Guy Kibbee as the family lawyer and everyone else goes merely on with the show.

And what a show! The first number is "Pettin' in the Park." "Pettin' in the park, bad boy! // Pettin' in the park, bad girl! // First you pet a bit, then you set a bit, then you get a little kiss," sing the young men to their girlfriends. As the number proceeds, a sudden thunderstorm sends the girls off to change clothes while a midget tries to peek behind the screen where they are changing. It turns out the girls have changed into metal costumes which frustrate their amorous boyfriends when they return to 'pettin' in the park', until the midget turns up with a can opener.

The finale of the movie (which otherwise ends happily with all 3 girls getting their man) is the sad "Remember My Forgotten Man" sung by Blondell. This is a song about the plight of the unemployed WWI veterans and makes a tragic production number.

Gold Diggers of 1933 was, of course, released during the Depression. And it was apparently exactly the sort of thing people were looking for to take their minds off the situation. Of course the movie was ridiculous, but it had extremely entertaining musical numbers. It seems that people must have a really deep need for entertainment before they are willing to expand their sense of wonder enough to accept a totally fantastic movie as Gold Diggers.

1933 was also the year that Footlight Parade was released. Unlike most other musicals, Footlight Parade had a plot which did a beautiful job of fitting the musical numbers into the movie. James Cagney plays Chester Kent, head of "Chester Kent Productions," an outfit that mass produces prologues, live stage shows for theaters to put on before their movie. Naturally he is faced with lots of problems -- a wife who leaves him, a gold digging girlfriend, dishonest partners, one whose wife is constantly foisting her relatives and proteges off on the company (including young singer Dick Powell and Hugh Herbert, the legal expert, who at one point is found showing Cagney's girlfriend 'what's illegal in Kansas City.') But Cagney does have compensations -- the ever faithful secretary, Joan Blondell, his dance director, Frank McHugh (Cagney didn't make many movies in the 30s without McHugh), and his newest discovery, Ruby Keeler, the mousy secretary who turns out to have lots of talent.

Besides the numerous subplots, the main story concerns Cagney's difficulties as his ideas are constantly being stolen by a competitor, culminating in the rival getting to a big theater owner first. But Chester Kent Productions is promised the contract if they can get 3 great new prologues together in 3 days. Naturally, they do it and the film's climax is the production of all 3 numbers, at 3 different theaters, on the same night! They get the contract and they certainly deserve it with these numbers. The

first, "Honeymoon Hotel," exhibits even less taste than "Pettin' in the Park." But the next routine is "By a Waterfall", one of the most amazing (and erotic) musical numbers ever put on the screen. The campus audience we saw the movie with laughed through the scene, but possibly they were amused by Powell's voice. The number itself explores the possibilities of the water ballet just about to its limits (Esther Williams not withstanding.) The final 'fountain of beauty' is probably Busby Berkeley's best executed tableau.

The grand finale of the movie is "Shanghai Lil", which stars James Cagney (he is forced to go on when the evil rival gets his juvenile drunk) as a sailor looking for his Shanghai Lil through the bars and dope dens of the ci ty. He finds Lil (Ruby Keeler) shortly before he is scheduled to march off to his ship. In this part of the number the marching men are used as had been the swimming girls in the previous number to create patterns. This time instead of the kaledescopic designs of the previous number, the American flag and other symbols are presented. At the end of the number, it appears Cagney must sail off without his Lil, but the last figure in the marching line has a familiar and very un-masculine figure. Sure enough, it's Keeler, and she marches on board.

All in all, Footlight Parade is one of Warner's and Busby Berkeley's best pictures. Berkeley was the choreographer on the movie. He had come from Broadway to Hollywood shortly after the debut of talkies and he worked on most of the Warner's 30s musicals. He later went on to direct some of the musicals (and other films including They Made Me a Criminal with John Garfield, Claude Rains, and The Dead End Kids!) Berkeley's Hollywood work makes it obvious that while he liked the stage, he was well aware of its limitations. For Berkeley, there were no limitations in movie musicals. Time after time in his movies the small theater stage on which the number began turns into a huge set with pools, stairs, incredible backgrounds and literally hundreds of singers and dancers. It's hard to avoid thinking that his movie work was something like wish fulfillment for Berkeley the Broadway choreographer. It must have required a fantastic imagination to come up with a Berkeley number, even if that imagination was sometimes a little crude and the numbers didn't always work. Luckily Berkeley's successful numbers are recorded on film for us to marvel at, while his less successful moments are still around for our entertainment.

Dames is not one of Berkeley's failures. In fact, this is one of the most amusing of the Warners musicals. It features Hugh Herbert as an eccentric millionaire, Ezra Ounce, who heads a society devoted to preserving American morals. He is against all vices (although he uses up bottle after bottle of obviously alcoholic tonic in the course of the movie.) Somehow Herbert gets involved with putting on a show, with young producer Dick Powell. Powell is naturally attracted to Herbert's niece, Ruby Keeler and romances her with "When You Were a Smile on your Mother's Lips (and a Twinkle in Your Daddy's Eye.)" Powell also gets to sing the title song "Dames," which reflects the basic philosophy of the Warners (and most other) musicals. "Who writes the words and music // Of all the girlie shows? // No one cares and no one knows. // ...Who cares if there's a plot or not, // If they got a lot of dames." The show they put on ends up as a compromise between Powell's 'artistic' taste and Herbert's moral restrictions. It includes Joan Blondell singing "The Girl at the Ironing Board." By the time Powell gets around to his finale, Herbert has had enough tonic that he would applaud anything, but the number, "I Only Have Eyes for You," can be appreciated even by people who aren't tipsy. Even Powell's singing sounds good in this number and the effects, including a huge 'human jigsaw puzzle' of Keeler's face, are vastly entertaining.

Warners did lots more musicals during the 30s featuring Powell, Keeler, Ginger Rogers (before she met up with Fred Astaire), Al Jolson, and many more. Many of the movies had good moments but most were unbearably bad, as the directors forgot the cardinal rule of musicals and let the plot get in the way of the numbers (or else used only numbers

you would be glad to ignore in favor of the plot.) One of the other movies in the Gold Diggers series, Gold Diggers of 37, is a prime example. But before that, Busby Berkeley directed Gold Diggers of 35 and did a remarkable job. The movie probably has too much plot, as character after gold digging character tries to get money from the richest family at the exclusive resort hotel. Alice Brady plays the stingy matriarch of the family, but one can sympathize with her attitude towards he children, the often married Frank McHugh and silly Gloria Stuart. Hugh Herbert repeats as an eccentric millionaire who is also the object of many gold digging schemes. Chief among the gold diggers are Dick Powell, a medical student whorking at the hotel during his summer vacation, Glenda Farrell, a stenographer and Adolphe Menjou, a down-on-his-luck Russian director.

Naturally, Alice Brady is persuaded to put on a show, for the Milk Fund, but she asks that everything be the cheapest. While Menjou and other working on the show are taking her to the cleaners, Powell is out seducing her daughter, Powell's fiance is entrapping McHugh, and Glenda Farrell has arranged to blackmail Hugh Herbert. Certainly it is an unpleasant situation, and Alice Brady's character is played a bit too sympathetically to let the audience really appreciate her bad fortune, but the cynical attitude that pervades the movie is a refreshing change from the sickly sweetness of many of the previous movies and certainly justifies the 'Gold Diggers' title.

But, as with all the other movies, the plot is not the important thing -- the musical numbers are. "I'm Going Shopping with You" and "The Words are in My Heart" are nice production numbers but terrible songs. However the finale is worth sitting through any sort of movie for. The number, Berkeley's best, is "Lullaby of Broadway." This is a long number, 10 or 15 minutes, and goes through some incredible sequences. It begins with a very long shot with Wini Shaw's face visible as a tiny spot of white in the darkness. As the camera pulls closer she invites you to listen to the song of the broadway 'babies'. Finally, with her face filling the screen, she takes a puff off her cigarette (?), looks upward and her profile turns into the Manhattan skyline!

Then Powell, Shaw and a cast of thousands present the song graphically. Shaw is seen coming home "early in the morning" from a night on the town and going to bed. She awakes after dark in time to dress for the next evening. Powell takes her to a night-club where they are the only customers and hundreds of male and female dancers tap-dancing on the huge modernistic set are the floor show. Wini Shaw is persuaded to join the dancers ("Come and dance." // "I fear you might not let me." // "Come and dance." // "Why don't you come and get me.") The 'Broadway baby' then exuberantly dances up the stairs, throws open a window on the top floor and falls to her death. What a finish!

No, they don't make movies like that anymore. Well, most people don't. Ken Russell almost succeeded when he took on the genre and did The Boy Friend. No one number in that movie equals Berkeley's finest but in the best tradition of the 30s musical The Boy Friend features a young, inexperienced girl who has to go on when the star breaks a leg, a number of amusing minor characters, a plot that doesn't get in the way of the musical numbers (and in fact greatly encourages them), lots of musical numbers and a happy, if rather cynical, conclusion. Certainly Russell was borrowing heavily from the old musicals -- The Boy Friend is one long reference to the musical cliches of the past 40 years. And it's great entertainment.

Maybe, just maybe, they'll start making good musicals again. Not only has Hollywood apparently found out that the standard stage musical, as Mame, Funny Girl, Hello Dolly, just don't make money anymore, but also we seem to be heading into another depression. That's bad news for most people, but it's good news for the entertainment industries and it may give them the incentive to make escapist musicals again.
CONTINUE ON PAGE 27

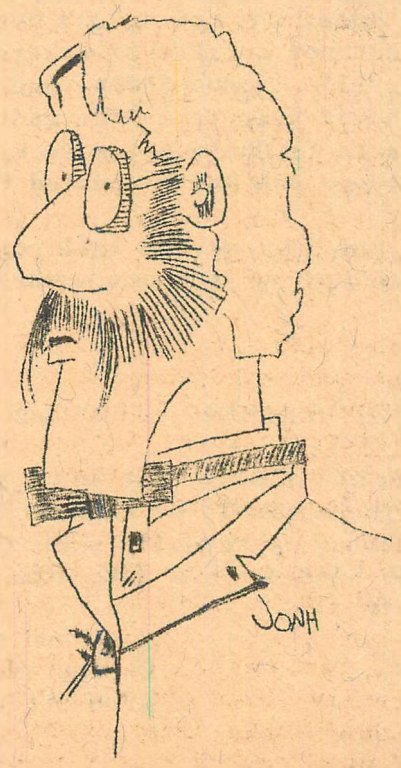
SEVERAL THINGS OR ANOTHER AND LINER NOTES TOO

+ Jim Turner +

It is indeed a pleasure to discuss, however briefly, the life and career of Johann Amedeus Machefsky on the occassion of the release of his greatest hits, this newest release in the noted Orphic Egg series, entitled MACHEFSKY'S HEAD with the witty Gahan Wilson drawing of what is, indeed, the mummified head of Johann Amedeus Machefsky, made available by the kind permission of the International Red Cross and the Machefsky family.

What can we really say about Johann Machefsky? I don't know. We don't know for a fact just where or when he was born nor the exact date of his death. How peculiar that the composer of the "Suggestive Overture" and "Three Nocturnes and an Octaroon" should be so shrouded by obscurity. Unfortunately, what little we do know about him is less than inspiring: Losing all his money to Mozart in a billard parlour, his tragic involvement in the pederasty case of little Baron Anselmo (to whom he dedicated the "Magic Bowl Movement" of his Symphoney No. 2, "Pathetic.") His name appears in one of Prince Schvinekund's letters to Beethoven, "... and do be sure to count the spoons if Machefsky makes good on his threat to extend his company to you."

After studying briefly with P.D.Q. Bach, we find him for a time in Naples instructing the British Ambassador, Sir William Hamilton, in composition. He vacated this position with some speed and great mystery and, to the end of his days (whenever that was,) he remained steadfast in his refusal to discuss what reasons Sir William had for trying to thrust him into the maw of Vesuvius on one of Sir William's frequent ascents.



Sometime after this he was denied a loan by Goethe and so, in desperation, he began a bout of composing that was ended only by his total inability to interest any contemporary publisher in his work. Today, of course, the Orphic Egg series has done what no one else ever saw any reason to do.

Among the delightful, if not downright "heavy" and/or "righteous" selections on this eclectic resume of one man's creative mediocrity, we have the "Pastuerized" theme and variations from his witty little "Cheese Fantasy," his Nocturne No. 2 ("the Snorer,") the "Bombastido" and "Repetitive" movements of his "Symphony Honoring the Imperial Customs Bureau" (No. 4) and the entirety of his "Imitative Suite." His oratorio based on Richardson's novel PAMELA awaits appearance on a subsequent recording. Yes friends and highbrows, who can truly doubt the value of so rich and fertile a compost?

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A new Willie Gimp album is always an event and FUNKY EXORCIST is hardly an exception. Willie's career has been a long one, very diffuse, and sometimes uneven. First time we hip critics took any note of him was back in 1965 when he was the lead singer for a shortlived, bitchin' Motown group, the Regeritants. Only one hit though, that winter, "I Want to Drink a Six Pack of Your Precious Love," and the brilliant concept album that followed (BLACK PUKE) never made it very far because of Willie's untimely arrest on three counts of armed robbery and corrupting the morals of a minor. But he's been out for several years because of an unfortunate miscarriage of justice and has been blowing our minds all the time.

I must admit I don't really care for the title cut. We all know already that exorcists are funky and, besides, who cares anyway? It's cuts like the next one that show just what Willie's got and where he's going. It's a mindbender called "The Godfather (Must Get Laid and Blown.") Willie's past free jazz now and into. . . Fact is, he's calling it, in Mile's tradition of the "cool," and the "walk," the "sucker." Just dig that fife and kettledrum combo! Those cats literally wail. (Really, yuh see, bub, those are real live registered Persians inside those kettledrums and. . .) "Death Trip (But Don't Fall)" ends Side One on a note of desperate screaming ambience that I, for one, haven't got anything else to say about.

All of Side Two is taken up by an orchestral suite from the soundtrack Willie whipped out for Bergman's newest flick, DULL STORY, and it's a bitch. 'Nuff said. Get it.

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Bob Roy Hinkle's been getting better and better all the time since his release and all of us down here in Nashville think his first album is ear-lickin' good! Bob Roy's something new around here cause Nashville ain't seen too many Maoist C&W pickers, at least not outside of Bakersfield. Check out "Give All the Power to the People, Boy, or I'm Agonna Stomp Yore Ass" if you're one of the five or ten folks out there who didn't hear it on the radio. And if you like that one neighbor, give a little listen to "I Don't Drive My Rig to Cater to the Bourgeoise" and then stop and chuckle at the way Bob Roy's updated "Old Blue" into "Running Dog Lackey."

P.S. Bob Roy says to tell you if you're ever in the neighborhood to stop by the old commune and spread some manure with him! Y'All come or he'll turn you in!

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WE'RE IN THE MUSIC (continued from page 25)

If you can't wait that long, you can hear some of the great (and not so great) tunes from the musicals on Warners Fifty Years of Film Music. Of course, that's not the same thing as actually seeing the numbers on the screen. So keep an eye on the television listings and late some night you too may be able to see Ruby Keeler inviting you to:

"Come and meet those dancing feet.
On the avenue I'm taking you to.
42nd Street."

DANCE TO THE MUSIC

+ Juanita Coulson +

Been a fair amount of speculative, nostalgia-laden articles in the papers and Sunday supplements this year on "Are the big bands coming back?" Well, regarding that burning question -- I could care less, but not much. Perhaps it's because I was never the right age to appreciate the big bands. As far as I was concerned during the 40s, big band music was something boring thrown into movie shorts and radio programs (where they served the same functions as commercials do on tv -- providing an opportunity to go raid the fridge until something interesting came on.)

And what was a band and what was a "Big Band"? I never knew, or worried about it. In the early 40s, when I was starting to pay attention to things, you couldn't avoid bands. Everywhere. Anything other than country and western schlock in cowboy movies involved a band -- either stage front or backing up a singer or quartet. Don't get the idea that I abhored all this stuff totally. I've got a very broad musical horizon; I can tolerate damned near anything. I even learned to like some of it, on a very simplistic level. The first record I recall owning was Kay Kyser's "I Got Spurs That Jingle Jangle Jingle." Played it on a hand crank, weighed-a-pound, tone-armed portable record player (mono, not stereo, if anyone out there remembers mono). I must have been about seven at the time, and I drove my parents as crazy playing and re-playing that record as kids now do with "Tubby the Tuba" or "Rubber Duckie." At that time there weren't any records designed specifically for my age group, and I latched onto the Kyser number as listenable and bouncy and humalongable. The words meant nothing to me.

I liked that corny little 78rpm record a hell of a lot better than anything I ever heard by Glenn Miller, or was ever going to hear. And you may lump nearly everything the Dorseys and Goodman and Herman at al did in the same category.

Big band sound, in the 40s, was dance music. Not my idea of dance -- which was reacting to the music and jumpin' for joy. (Even at age seven I was into that, but maybe I was kinda strange. Hell, I know I was.) But dancing that was the same schmear as "love mush" in cowboy movies . Something that adults did for their own arcane and pointless reasons. An activity that had nothing to do with pleasure but

everything to do with dating and marriage and all manner of dull and unattractive stuff. I never believed those couples in their formal clothes, gliding around a polished floor to the tootlings of a bunch of uniformed (and bored-looking) musicians could really be digging that scene. All an act. Like partriotically saying they were proud and happy to pay taxes to help the war effort. Or they just loved working the swing shift six days a week and doing without a new car and a Christmas tree and sorting ration coupons to see if they could afford another pound of hamburger. Adult lies, all of it.

The whole thing seemed like Muzak in a dance hall.

Of course, being a kid, I got my ideas on music strictly from radio and movies. Any place with live entertainment was generally serving liquor and off limits. And I wouldn't have been interested in the music 99 % of the time, anyway.

Movies were too often Bette Midler slowed down and compounded. Oh, "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" is pretty faithful to the Andrews Sisters -- and the various Andrews imitators (and there were more than you'd imagine; I wish I could blot them all out of my memory.) Midler's hit the right note, I must say. The Andrews were camp even when they were on the crest; just that nobody then had a word for what they were. One of the more mind-boggling recurring bits in "funny" wartime boot camp movies... and few featuring supposed front-line dramas...would be a bunch of male plug uglies in drag, lip synching to one of those ubiquitous Andrews' records. Trouble was, despite all the laugh-tracky hilarity from the in-the-movie audience, the drag performance missed its main impact for (alleged) humor -- hard-faced, ugly guys imitating pretty and feminine women. Mostly because the Andrews' were, let's face it, homelier than Midler herself. Probably kind to their husbands and good all around sports. But even at my then tender age it sure didn't strike me as a sublime to the ridiculous setup. More the silly and the silly.

And there was a lot of silly music in the 40s. Any time you younger types get hassles from the olders on why don't they write songs the way they used to -- feel free to mention "Mairzy Doats" and "Hut Sut Ralston on the RillaRa" (and a Brala Brala Suet...).

No, that wasn't all of it. Lots of moldy fig would-be jazz (after they got the lumps out and stopped feeling so damned formal about the music.) Lots of bold and brave cardboard classical stuff. The best of that was lyricless movie scores backing films like PURPLE HEART and FLYING FORTRESS and SO PROUDLY WE HAIL. I'm sure a lot of under 30s see these on the tube and think "Oh now really!" ...but at the time they went down well. Different kinda war games, believe me. Whole different mood. 180 degrees around from Nam.

We got sheet music. Records didn't sell nearly so well then. 78s tended to break when you looked crosseyed at them. They were heavy, low fidelity and what fi there was disintegreated in pretty rapid order under the needles and machines we had then. Ten or a dozen plays of a record and you had as much hiss as you had music.

So, if you had a piano -- no one but musicians played guitar or uke, but lotsa people could pick out simple stuff on the 88 -- you bought sheet music of all the latest pop tunes. The oozey sniff-sniff wartime ballads like "Blue Birds Over the White Cliffs of Dover" and "I'll Walk Alone." And the cheerfully jingoistic, thumbs-up stuff like "Comin' in on a Wing and a Prayer" and "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" (I am not kidding!).

But when people kinda wanted to forget things -- we didn't have the nuclear holocaustitis then, but a hell of a lot of people felt a distinct whiff of Armageddon clinging to WWII -- they danced to big bands or went to the movies.

Lotsa movies. Lotsa music. I don't think American pop culture of the time had any right to poke fun at opera: That blue collar sneer of heavy drama going on and a guy stabbed and he has to stop in the middle of dying so he can sing an aria. Well, the 40s movies weren't quite that bad, but almost. Not just the Autry and Rogers Westerns engineered the corniest chances to break for a song. Tons of everything's-roses musicals of happy, happy people with teeny-tiny problems, bursting into joyous, frothy soloes, duets, and chorales at no opportunity at all.

We even had rock movies. Remember the snorts of critics about the early days of rock when we had nothingsville plots of young love crossed, studded with 10 or 12 gigs from Bill Haley or other rock groups? Sneer sneer sneer. Well, they did the same damned thing during the 40s. Only it wasn't rock. It was the Andrews' sisters (or imitators), a band, one or more C-Grade comedy routines, maybe a carefully segregated bit from Nat King Cole or a black quartet like the Mills Brothers. . .and the inevitable jitterbug demonstration.

I always ranked jitterbugging right up there with "championship" wrestling and the roller derby. Freak show. And the film makers treated it that way. Jitterbug contests showed up regularly on the newsreels. Footage from someplace like Roseland or Atlantic City. A voice-over from the announcer letting you know this was the "how's this for a laugh?" section of the news report. Focus on the freakiest dancers there. Which meant the most acrobatic, natch. For the black competition (pretty often they

had their own separate contest; not fair to have 'em side by each with the whites because we all know them darkies got natural rhythm) that meant zoot suits. Lotsa pomade. Lotsa pelvis. Clowns in blackface. The white competitors weren't much better. The winning white couple got the prize for muscles and wind; the guy who could throw his partner furthest up in the air (and hopefully catch her), the girl who could shake a tail feather and show enough stepins to give the judges a thrill.

All very gross and embarassing. No wonder I got turned off so-called social dancing so early. Those cats weren't dancing for the fun of it. They were making idiots of themselves for cold cash. Ten years earlier they'd been marathon dancing for the same purpose. Jitterbugging was more amusing than that, but not a lot.

Except for race music (which few whites knew about or would touch) the 40s was a battle between novelties and the crooners. Then you got into the Frank Sinatra thing and combined the two. I learned to loathe the whole bit. Never did learn to like anything about Sinatra, and still don't. His screaming audience phenomena was so offensive it clung. Took me a long time to appreciate anything at all by Presley, even on the lowest level. And the groupie aroma almost robbed me of enjoying the Beatles. (The same thing applies to current rock. I don't think screaming groupies are any more coherent or aware of music than Sinatra's swooning bobby soxers were.)

But when I bought records, most of the time I bought novelty stuff. I've always been sorry I didn't pick up one gem you may have seen on clips on Cavett; Bette Davis in STAGE DOOR CANTEEN doing "They're Either Too Young or Too Old." Nice take-off on the whole era. . .and Tallulah. . .by somebody who was obviously enjoying herself. Pity there wasn't more of that in the 40s.

Actually, when you come right down to it, if you weren't old enough to be into ballroom, big band stuff, if you got bored with the movies. . .there wasn't a lot of music available in the 40s. Radio featured classical and an occasional big band backup for comedians like Benny and Hope. But big chunks of radio were drama; that music was the same as movie score music, for mood, usually suspense. You could buy sheet music and play songs on the piano if you'd heard something you liked in the movies. But there weren't very many DJs, if any. And as I said records were heavy, expensive, and fragile. You hated to hear something you liked sinking slowly into a cobra pit deeper and deeper each time you played it with that heavy old needle. And a shelf full of single 78 records could cave in your floor.

So you played jukeboxes. Somewhere in the late 40s I discovered "You Came a Long Way from St. Louis" by Ray McKinley. Combo, not big band. Easy elements. Blend of black and white music. Nice. A few of the bands were beginning to branch out, too. Combine novelty instrumentals with some fresh jazz fillips. Guy named Stan Kenton was rearing his head, thinking about really farout stuff.

And then, very late in the 40s, something extremely important happened. Not to music itself. Not at first. But to the way you heard music. Some genius finally figured out that people liked music, wanted to listen to it, but couldn't hack those 78s. For a while we had a technological war over what speed and size the new records were going to be and a lot of grousing when the public heard it was going to have to shell out for a whole new player system whatever happened.

Then the pieces settled back to earth. You had the single 45 (Extended Plays never

really caught on, though I have a few) -- weighing a tenth what the old 78 rpm did. Then the rock platter became possible, cheap, portable. You had the LP. 8 to 12 numbers at a sixth the weight a 78 single permitted. The album was in business.

And so was music.

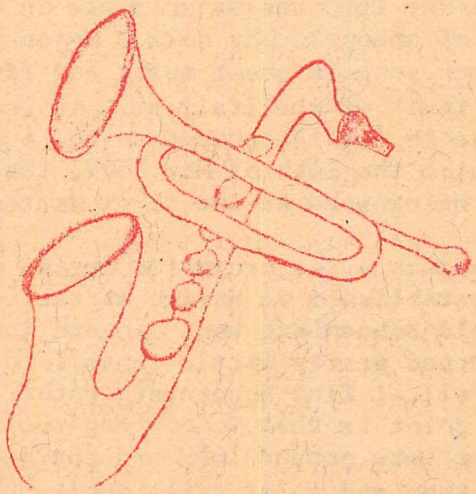
I've never seen a pertinent sales graph, but I was on the buying end of the scale, somebody who'd been waiting for just this chance. I'm willing to wager that the music industry, within a couple of years, didn't know what hit it. Pleasantly. All of a sudden music that no one in the general populace had heard was available. DJs started, took off big. Rock started. R&B melted into it. People who loved show music could buy that. People who dug old pressings of Enrico Caruso could get a new copy, scratches edited out, on a surface that would take hundreds of plays without showing up like an audience hissing a melodrama's villain. People with no access to Kenton's live performances could hear him, appreciate what he was experimenting with.

Maybe it was Pandora's box -- the LP and the 45 -- but I don't think so. It was good news for people who liked music. Some of the purists quibbled that the mob was buying records instead of paying to see live performances. But most of those people never had an opportunity throughout the 40s to see and hear live music. A good record was a damned sight better than nothing.

The LP didn't kill the big band. But it sure helped the small group compete on equal terms. No need to rent a hall to spread your wares. Put it on wax and push it and maybe hit gold.

No, the major thing the LP did was put Fini on the 40s. And while I was lucky enough to have it pretty easy during that era. . .considering. . .I'm not about to wallow in regret for the passing of shoulder pads and pompadours and peg pants and baby doll spikes and lace-front dickeys. Or those trained bears following a figure-8 on the hardwood floor, the jitterbuggers. Or the skinny baton and the Welkish brass players and the grinning like an ape bandleader.

But I think the next time Bette Davis is featured on some late-night talker and there's a promise they'll run that clip from STAGE DOOR CANTEEN, I'll set up the cassette and capture one of the few snippets from the 40s I'd like to hang onto.



ELECTROLUX iMUSIC

+ Leigh Edmonds +

Some visitors look at my synthesizer and ask if I can play them a tune on it.

I reply, "What do I want to play a tune for?"

I have a piano, a bit out of tune in a couple of places (especially the A above middle C which is becoming legendary) but it plays tunes fine if people who visit like to play tunes. I reckon there are enough tunes on the radio and on records to last anybody a million years. So I don't bother playing tunes. I get accused of being a musical snob for what I think about music. Especially tunes. Because I am down on tunes people think that I don't like them. Of course I like them. Everybody likes them. Every one of us has been hearing tunes since the day they were born, we can't help liking them. But when people say that tunes is what music is all about I say that's not so and since people are conditioned to think that if you are not for something you're against it, I'm obviously against tunes. Oh well. . .

What is the most memorable bit of music that Beethoven ever composed? Ask a random sampling of any population and you'll get results like: 15% whistling or singing "Freude, schoener, Goeter funken..." etc from the Ninth, 10% randomly through all his works, 40% won't know and 35% will go "Bom, Bom, Bom, Bah." You can't tell me that "Bom, Bom, Bom, Bah" is a tune and you can't tell me that the bit from the Ninth is a very good tune. But these are still world famous bits of music. So what's the big deal about tunes.

The history of music gets divided up into periods, so far there are really only three so you can guess I'm not writing about Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Serial, and so-on, periods. The first period began a long way back, millenia before Roscoe. This has to do with people singing, that's what people did in those days. There were instruments that musicians played but the instruments only accompanied and imitated the voices. People invented modes to sing in and everything was a really big deal, people were making fortunes and big names from the whole show. Then the Italians had their renaissance and we moved over gradually from dominance of voices to the dominance of instruments. At about the same time modes gave way to scales and all the stuff we know now. Why is C the major scale on a keyboard when you'd think A should hold that place of honour? Why does a major scale only have seven notes? Why can I buy the latest rock song in sheet music and find it marked "Allegro ma non troppo"? It's all the fault of the Italians. At least for this movement into the new style we have a date to peg the change on to, a rather arbitrary date to be sure but who cares. Let's pick the 14th of May 1567, that was when Monteverdi was born and he is more or less recognised as the first Master of the new style.

Passing very quickly through a few centuries during which all the names we are familiar with today became established we arrive at the beginning of this century when, according to many, Arnold Schoenberg went mad and invented his new system which, if it did nothing else, turned pretty little tunes into hideous creations unfit for the human ear. For myself, I find Schoenberg rather pleasant listening but that's beside the point. The point is that Schoenberg realised that the set of musical rules which had become popular back around 1600 had run out, become bankrupt, etc. A lot of people didn't agree then and a lot still don't. I guess they are in the majority, but then they don't make the music these days. What is interesting about this new

system is that it came into being at a time when, historically, there needed to be a new media of musical sound production to carry the load of the new system. Such instruments either did not exist or were too crude. This was a case of theory being ahead of the practical business of technology. Many people knew what was needed but they didn't know how to make it.

It must have become evident that, along with the end of the domination of the rules of harmony, an end was actually coming to the reign of pitch as the dominating influence in music. Have a look at the size of the orchestra at the time. The composer was getting more and more interested in the sonorities that this massive musical instrument could produce. In about 1900 Fenrico Busoni (a noted teacher, pianist and composer) wrote an article about the need for the invention of new musical instruments. He seemed to be calling for the invention of some crude form of musical synthesizer but he was probing into areas where nobody had been before and probably wasn't too clear himself on where he was aiming.

A while after that, when electricity was becoming a worthwhile proposition, several electronic musical instruments were developed, machines you don't hear much about today but rather important devices in their time even if they did nothing else but point out a direction in which people might advance.

There was a problem though. There were these machines but there wasn't too much that they could do with them. Sure, you could compose a concerto for Ondet Martenot but what kind of music do you end up with? The same sort of music as before only dressed up, a gimmick virtually, but not too lasting. Remember that in those days the only means of reproducing music was off a sheet of music or (if you weren't too fussy) from a gramaphone. Sheet music was ideal for playing a violin or a piano from but these new machines didn't fit into the framework and when they were made to fit their performance was compromised.

Looking for the means of expression that they knew they needed some composers turned to the gramaphone record. They scratched records, played them fast or slow and played them backwards. They played three or more treated records at once and set up new musical forms. They went and recorded street noises, domestic noises, conventional noises and unconventional noises and treated them and worked them into their new forms. It was the beginning of musique concrete and it appeared that these composere were really onto something. There were many pieces of music made, even operas, but in the end the record proved that its range of manipulation was rather limited and the composers came to a dead end.

Then somebody invented the tape recorder (Roscoe bless him) and the limitations that had existed so far just seemed to evaporate. The horizon seemed absolutely limitless. The composers who had experimented with discs and musique-concrete found that anything was possible and in Cologne

a music studio was set up which carried out experiments into pure electronic music. It was the first electronic music studio and from it came many works, among them the compositions of Karlheinz Stockhausen, the most highly regarded of all electronic composers. For a while the two different forms held themselves to be exclusively the vanguard of the New Music but gradually they became acquainted with each others methods and finally melted together.

So much for history. What about electronic music?

People working in electronic music are simply the composers at the beginning of the third period of human musical development. First there was human made music (singing), then there was played music (people playing instruments) and now we are beginning upon the period of programmed music (people controlling but not playing instruments). What electronic music is about is exactly the same thing that music has always been about. The only difference is that the ears on most people are not used to the break with tradition and hear little but noises. That's nothing new, Monteverdi and his friends had the same trouble.

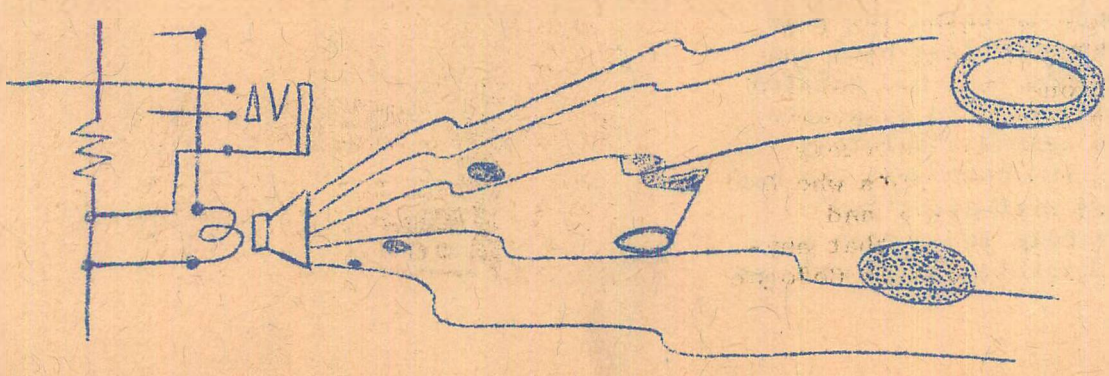
The problem (if it can be called such) is that the range of sound now available to a composer is infinite and the business of organizing that infinity demands incredible self control from a composer. In previous ages when composers manipulated tones there were rules that went with the tones and to be a famous composer you simply had to manipulate the tones and rules with some degree of genius. Order had already been imposed on the chaos of sound then but now the order has gone. A composer has to make all his own rules as he goes along.

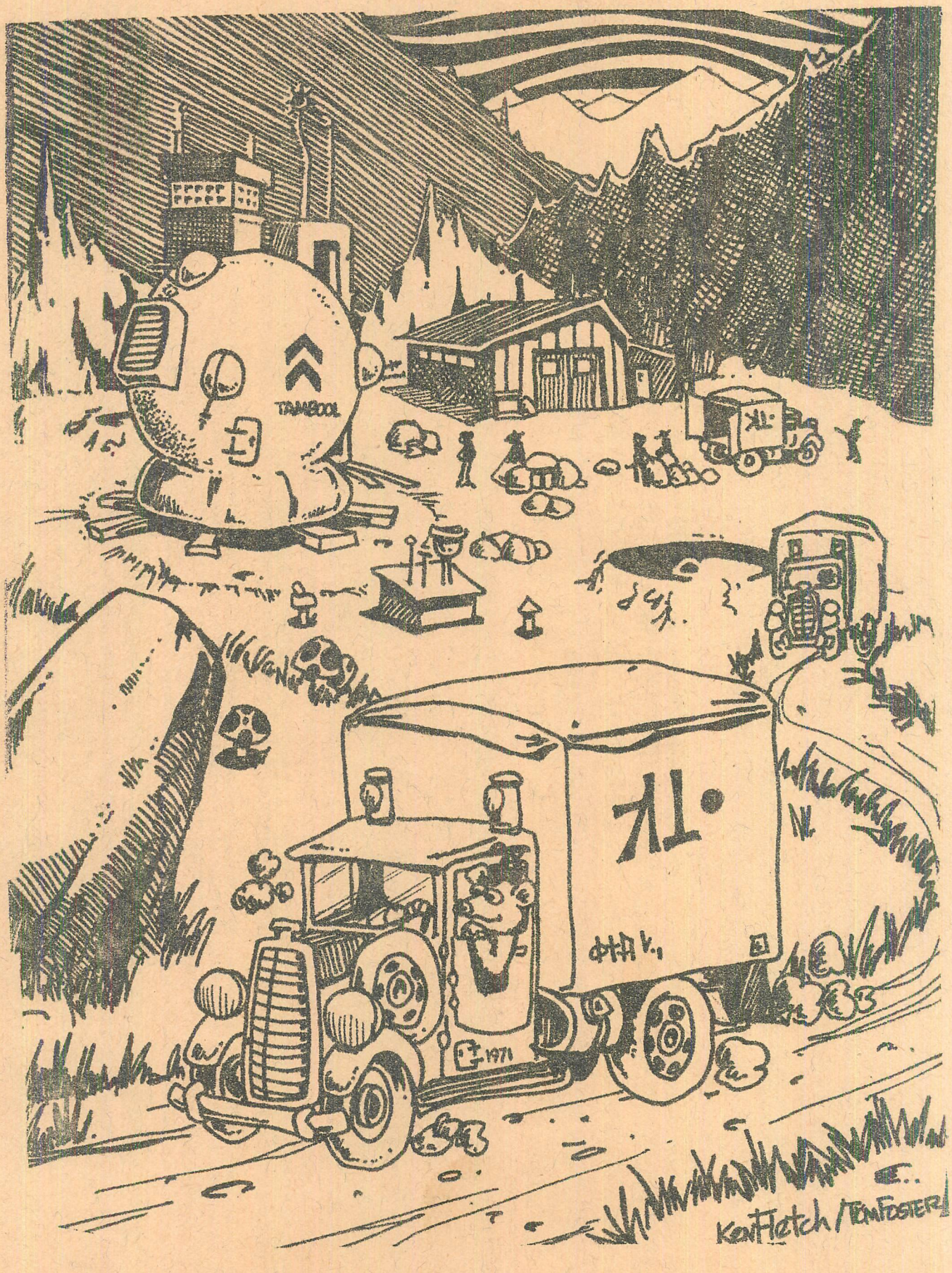
I own a synthesizer, an English machine, a Synthi AKS. It's a small machine built into a plump attache case. When you open the case up you see a panel full of knobs on one side and a funny looking keyboard in the lid. People look at the instrument panel and think about computers or aircraft cockpits, then they look at the keyboard and think of musical instruments.

"Can you play us a tune on it?" they ask.

"What do I want to play a tune for," I reply. "If you want to play a tune there's a piano over there. It's designed specifically to play tunes. This instrument can play tunes but that's not what it's designed to do."

When most people think of electronic music they think of the Moog and in particular "Switched on Bach". I like the record and I like the way the synthesizer is used. The people who put that record together really knew a lot about synthesizers and displayed their knowledge well. Since, at one stage, they do a little bit of free interpolation and show themselves up rather poorly as creators of original music it is perhaps just as well that they stuck to Bach. Unfortunately too many people hear that record - or the one following it - and think that's all there is to electronic music. I suppose they're not to blame though. That's all they get to hear and that's all they are told. Electronic music may be important but it's not popular.




TANBOOL
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