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TAPPEEN

If this is anything, it's very probably

TAPPEN

a fanzine edited and produced by Malcolm Edwards, 26 Duckett Road, London N4 1BN, U.K. It is available because I sent it to you, and for no other reason. Continued availability may (or may not) depend on your response. This first issue was begun on Friday 12th June 1981 (at about 3:15 in the afternoon, if you want to be pedantic), at which time the editor had only a fairly vague idea of what it was to contain. Look at the end for contents list, credits etc.

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FRONT PAGE DRIVE-IN NEWS

I can recall quite clearly the moment when I decided that it was high time I published another fanzine. I was standing in the bathroom of Terry and Craig Hughes's basement apartment in Arlington VA, and I was shaving. This was an unusually messy and clumsy operation, because you can't use normal electrical appliances in the USA and I had had to resort, for the first time in years, to razor, shaving foam and self-mutilation. As I gazed at my white- and red-flecked face in the Hughes's mirror I suddenly thought to myself, It's about bloody time you published another fanzine, Edwards. That was in August 1978, and sure enough here it is.

Between the thought and the act a few other things happened. I went to three world sf conventions, for example, and even helped organize one of them. I left an easy and well-paid job to become a freelance writer, partly on the strength of contracts with a publisher who subsequently went bankrupt. I got married (not for the first time) and zipped at appalling speed past my 30th and 31st birthdays. I got drunk and boisterous and hurt my foot at Chris Priest and Lisa Tuttle's wedding reception. That was seven weeks ago, but my foot still hurts. I lost a fannish popularity contest to Joseph Nicholas. Somewhere along the way I was talking to some comparatively new fan (can it have been Graham James?) who asked me why I'd never done a fanzine.

Things were different once, let me tell you. Fandom being the advanced and forward-looking place it is, Andy Warhol's aphorism about everybody being famous for 15 minutes in the future has long been a truism in our corner of the universe. My quarter of an hour happened back in 1974 when I won both the Doc Weir Award (back in the days when it was still given to fans) and the Checkpoint Fan Poll (best fan writer, would you believe?). Everything looked rosy, but unfortunately in the seven years that followed I did little fan writing and no publishing at all. I can't think why this happened, because for almost the entire period I've had the clear intention to do a fanzine Real Soon Now.

If I wasn't writing straight on to stencil I could probably go on to

give you a deep and reflective piece about Who Knows Where The Time Goes, but the difficulty with this first-draft approach is that you are so busy trying to keep down the number of typing errors that you tend to lose the thread of what you're saying. (The advantage, however, which in my case outweighs this, is that you do Get It Done this way.) As it is I'll confine myself to saying that the long break in transmission was unintended, and from now on I can promise that TAPPEN will appear with a regularity that will make ANSIBLE look merely frequent by comparison. You betcha.

I couldn't make up my mind whether I wanted to do a personalzine or a general fannish fanzine, so in the end I decided to try to do both at once. My intention in this issue is to ramble on until I feel it's time for an article, then carry on some more, put in another article ... and so forth. We shall see how this works out. What I've been typing so far is in the nature of a flexing of long-disused muscles, a cracking of stiffened joints.

Possibly I should say where I stand on the Philosophy of Fanzines. (Here I may be retreading ground I previously covered while reviewing fanzines for MAYA; on the other hand, I may be contradicting completely what I said there.) Actually I'm a puritan on the subject. I believe that fanzines are a unique and very special form of communication in the form to which they have evolved in sf fandom. We are lucky to have them, and they deserve respect. I'm opposed to the view that it's okay to print any old rubbish because, what the hell, it's just a fanzine. On the contrary, I think that fanwriting is one of the few forms of writing which are pointless unless you are doing your very best.

What is special about fanwriting is, of course, the personal element. Articles may be written in a manner superficially resembling that of (say) Punch contributions, but the difference is that the author is writing for an extended circle of personal acquaintances. This makes possible a range of effects which are simply not possible in any other form of writing that I know of. These are, of course, the very qualities which some people dislike in fannish writing: they dismiss it as in-groupish, self-obsessed, limited to anecdotes about who said what to whom and who threw up on whose carpet. In one way this is a pity: people who make those kind of critical statements are missing something which they might enjoy if they took the trouble to investigate and understand what it is they are criticizing. But what the hell, that's their problem, as lack of comprehension is the problem of second-rate critics everywhere. In fact fannish writing by its very nature cannot, I think, appeal to anything but a very small audience; once the personal element goes it ceases to be special. This may give rise to a second critical misunderstanding, which says that a form of writing which only appeals to, say, a couple of hundred people can't be of much value. This is another way of saying (via various intermediate steps of reasoning that I won't bother to go into) that the only writing which is any good is contained in blockbuster best-sellers and the Bible.

But anyway ... now that I've justified it to myself, maybe I can get on with the fanzine.

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All this is proving harder than I thought -- but then I remember that it always has proved harder than I thought, which is why until very recently i had dozens of stencils for fanzines I embarked upon but never quite completed. I am trying here to establish the tone I want, and in fumbling for it in public am no doubt falling foul of all my own strictures (see above) concerning fanzines. In attempting to surmount these teething troubles I've been going back and rereading a number of fanzines from the early 1970s, and generally thinking back to my early years in fandom.

It's an awful realization that one's career in fandom now spans three decades ... not quite as awful as knowing that one's life spans five, but in the same league. My first contact with the sf world came in October 1969, when I joined the Cambridge University SF Society. I'd been an avid reader and accumulator of sf books, of course (I didn't think of it in those days as collecting, though from the outset I manifested the first sign of incipient collector's mania -- reading paperbacks with them opened about an inch and a half so as not to crack the spines), and I frequented the obscure London bookshops which stocked a limited range of American books. I even once met John Carnell in Les Flood's sf-and-record shop in Holborn when I was about 15. I must have recognized him from a jacket photo. He asked me who my favourite author was, and I said Clifford Simak. This was a long time ago.

When I went to Cambridge I didn't at first join the sf society, though at the time I was reading the stuff virtually to the exclusion of all else (certainly to the exclusion of any but the most minimal study). The reason was that at first I was more than a little overawed by the place (later I realized that Cambridge students on average were just as dumb as the rest of the human race, and often much dumber), and I thought that the SF group would therefore be full of Very Serious people discussing J.G. Ballard at a stratospheric level of sophistication. This is true.

At the beginning of my second year, however, I wandered along to the bazaar at which all the various university societies touted for members, and discovered the sf society stall manned by some cretin reading Stranger in a Strange Land. I joined. I went to the first meeting, at which the "serious" discussion consisted of the two people running the club testing the mettle of new recruits by asking them impromptu quiz questions. Many of these revolved around Poul Anderson novels serialized in Astounding, but I'd read all of those (this was a long time ago) and I knew all the answers.

In those days CUSFS (as it shall henceforth be known) was run by two people: Vic Hallett and Rog (or Roje, as he called himself in fanzines) Gilbert. Vic was a bookseller working at a branch of Heffer's, and he and his wife lived in a houseboat moored on the Cam. (By an odd coincidence it was the same houseboat that an aunt and uncle of mine had lived in three or four years previously. Small world. The same uncle is now a colleague of Dave Pringle's at Leeds Polytechnic. Small world.) Rog was a graduate student, and thus two or three years older than the rest of us at an age when such differences can seem like geological epochs. Rog was cocky, egocentric, loudmouthed, entirely in his element as Boasman of the group. He subsequently became a sort of legendary Idiot Figure of fandom, after making an utter fool

of himself in a contretemps with a couple of outspoken young fans named Pickersgill and Kettle, but for all his awful qualities Rog still occupies an affectionate place in my memories because a) he introduced me to fandom (though not very well) and b) I used to really enjoy those CUSFS meetings.

Unless we had a guest speaker there would often be no more than 5 of us at the meetings -- Rog, Vic, John Lowe (who is still to be seen at conventions), myself, and an amiable but thick engineering student known to all as Fred (though his name, if I recall correctly, was actually Ian). Fred was from Fitzwilliam, a college entirely populated by engineering students and sports fanatics, all of them thick but few of them amiable. We would meet in whichever pub we were using at the time, and unless Rog had a new sexual conquest to regale us with would talk solidly about science fiction until closing time. Then we would stagger to one of the colleges which had a late bar, where we would talk solidly about science fiction, play bar billiards and drink a lot more until about 2 am. Then it would be time to lurch back to one's room and sleep through the following day's lectures. It still sounds to me like a pretty good way of spending the State's money.

We also started to have occasional outings down to London, to visit the Globe, fabled home of famous writers and London fans. I knew about the Globe, of course, because I'd read about it in New Worlds. I could have gone there years previously, but again my nerve had failed: I remember that the mental picture I had of the place was of a meeting room with everyone sitting around in a big circle discussing science fiction. As you walked in the conversation ceased and all eyes turned accusingly in your direction.... (Am I the only person to have suffered these dire misconceptions?) It wasn't like that, of course. It was just a pub full of people who seemed to know one another and none of whom seemed to want to know us. Rog and Vic would go off to talk to other people, and the rest of us would huddle together or go and listen to John Brunner. We were suffering from the typical new fan's syndrome, though I can't remember ever experiencing the new fan's fallacy of thinking it's all their fault for not talking to me. My introversion (which I suffered from pretty badly at the time) was, I knew, my problem.

As it happened the next sf convention (there was only one a year then) was to be held in London, and since it was close to home I obviously had to go. If I had had any other interest clamouring equally for my attention that would have been the time when fandom and I parted company. This was the infamous Seicon '70, the convention of which all that needs to be said is that the co-chairmen were George Hay and Bram Stokes. It was in every way a disaster, and I can't remember enjoying it at all. The only mitigating circumstance was that as far as I could gather evrybody else thought it was a disaster too. The hotel was ghastly, and nine-tenths full of non-fans. The bars kept normal bar hours. All the fans I met (mostly members of Herts fandom, with whom Rog was chummy) struck me as dull in the extreme. I remember Perry Chapdelaine telling me in a gratuitously offensive sort of way how he thought I was a woman. (Pickersgill and Kettle, I later learned, had made the same mistake, and observing me from afar had wondered if I might be the fabled Lisa Conesa. Well, I had very long hair at the time and tended to cultivate a degree of androgyny, so this sort of thing never bothered me. What was different about Chapdelaine was that he was deliberately trying to offend, and I hadn't expected to meet people who behaved like the Cambridge police at a

science fiction convention. Yes, I was young then.) Unfortunately I didn't realize at the time that Chapdelaine was one of the worst writers ever to make it into print, so I was unable to respond properly.

The breakthrough into fandom for me came a few months later, in August 1970, and what precipitated it was something to do with student politics rather than science fiction. My university career coincided almost exactly with the main period of student radicalism in this country. At the end of my first year, for instance, a bunch of third-year students ceremonially burned their exam papers and had a fine time occupying administrative offices and issuing revolutionary manifestoes. I knew one of them as he'd been to the same school as me, where he had been a friend of my brother's. A few years later some of these people, including my brother's erstwhile friend, became more widely known as the Angry Brigade, and were quite properly put away for some of their dafter excesses.

Anyway, one cause which particularly exercised students in 1970 was the right-wing military dictatorship in Greece, and its many excesses. So when the city of Cambridge arranged a Greek Week in conjunction with the Greek Tourist Board it was inevitable that there would be protests (and quite right too). The week's climax was a big Greek banquet in a local hotel, and a demonstration was organized for that evening. I didn't go -- it was a bitterly cold night, and anyway I wanted to go and see 2001 at a local cinema. A large crowd gathered, a window got broken, the police over-reacted, and the next day the national papers were full of gory details of the "riot". A couple of dozen students were arrested and charged with fairly serious offences (several of them eventually went to jail), including a friend and an acquaintance of mine, both of whom were basically minding their own business at the back of the crowd when the police decided to single them out. Protests of various sorts ensued, including a petition which many students, myself included, took away at the beginning of the summer vacation in order to drum up signatures from people in the real world.

Come the August Globe it seemed only natural to take a few petition forms along. It worked very well -- not only did I get a lot of signatures, but I got into a number of interesting conversations for the first time ever at the Globe. I remember talking at length to Mike Moorcock (who previously had over-awed me from a distance) and Mike (M. John) Harrison. More important, when Chris Priest and Graham Charnock signed the thing and filled in their addresses, I noticed that they both lived quite near me -- Chris in Harrow, Graham in Wembley. (At the time I lived in Wembley, but worked in Harrow.) Chris's first novel, Indoctrinaire (not his best) had just been published, and I was able to tell him that Harrow central library (where I was whiling away the summer) was buying a copy, because a reader had filled in a reservation card for it. It turned out that the reader was none other than C. Priest, who had toured all the local libraries filling in pseudonymous reservations in the hope of boosting sales. That evening Chris gave me a lift home, one thing led to another with extraordinary speed, and by December Graham was helping me to produce my first fanzine. From there on it was downhill all the way.

There may be a moral to this story, in terms of How To Get Into Fandom. But I can't think what it might be.

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It occurs to me, thinking about the above, that while the sf fan world is traditionally small and hard to find -- sf enthusiasts can wander the country for decades without ever stumbling across it -- I've never found it so. Les Flood's shop, for instance, might have provided an entree. I discovered it quite by accident in my early teens when stamp collecting was still more of an interest than science fiction. After Christmas one year I went into town to visit one of my regular stamp shops, but to my annoyance found it closed. While mooning around I looked into the window of the record shop next door and noticed that it had a couple of racks of books at the back. Looking closer, they appeared to have spaceships on the covers... I'd been passing the place regularly for several years without ever noticing the dingy "Fantasy Book Centre" sign hanging outside. Then again, while at school I had a class-mate whose brother worked for the publishers Herbert Jenkins when they were doing sf. This brother was, furthermore, a BSFA member, and my friend brought in copies of Vector and Tangent for me to peruse under the desk during French lessons. A couple of years later my brother was doing a vacation job in a laboratory somewhere, and discovered that the guy with whom he shared a bench was an sf reader and publisher (and a BSFA member). He had even been to conventions. Not long after that I was working in a library between school and university and discovered that one of my fellow assistants was just as much of an addict as I was (I think he may have been in the BSFA too). We swapped books. He kept a scrapbook of sf reviews and newspaper clippings. I lost touch with him for over ten years, until I went to the SF Foundation and discovered he was a subscriber to Foundation and had corresponded with Peter Nicholls over the years. We met again when he donated his by-now vast hoard of clippings to the Foundation's library. Further, the Deputy Borough Librarian at the same place told me that he had been an sf fan in the early 1950s, and had even been to conventions, though I've never been able to substantiate this. (He was a drunken oaf, so one never knew whether he was telling the truth or bullshitting. If there are any fans out there with long memories his name was Les Darby. Probably still is, come to that.) All these encounters tend to make nonsense of the idea that sf fans are a tiny proportion of the population ... or rather, they provide corroboration of my theory that there are actually only about 1500 people in the world, the rest being cardboard props.

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As some of you will know I used to work for Gollancz as an assistant editor, and while I was there it was my happy duty to read all the unsolicited science fiction submissions. (One other person read all the other unsolicited stuff, but I reckon my job was worse, as there are no writers in other fields as bad as some would-be sf writers. (There are none as bad as some published sf writers...)) One typescript, however, stood head and shoulders above all others, so I thought I would share a few moments from it with you. It's an exciting story of adventure and conflict set in the 26th future. The hero is one Commander Lint (presumably a naval officer), who is in charge of a buccaneering spaceship squadron. I say this because otherwise you might find the title a trifle hard to comprehend. It is called Lints Privaters, and what follows is strictly sic...

The year if twenty five therty seven & man is already well on the way to the conquest of the Galaxy. Ultimately his goal is to rule the entire universe. One day he will but this is still far off in the future. With every year that passes by mans knowledge grows. Advances in engineering, medicine & serjery, the scienses have all contributed to his greater understanding of the world he lives in...

The Earth the seat of all learning. Hear on the home world man is taught all he needs to know. The great universities where the rich and inteligent congregate...

Close to the mother plannet are the home worlds forming the first of three plannetary belts around the Earth. The home worlds with their population of teeming millions are the beating heart of the confederacy giving life to Earth, the brain behind the power. Hear is the heart of indустre & commerce, flourishing in the confines of the closely nite worlds.

But all is not well. The aliens are soon attacking. Their 'leasions' greatly outnumbering the defenders...

on the next run the leasions changed their tactics. thay dropped height to 80 metres and circled the settlement discharging their deadly volleys of destruction every three seconds .the power drain was to much for the overburdened reactors to tack ,a quick garbled message from a technition to neilson about the reactor over lowding and fussing was all the time left befour the power station and the whole olf the northern side of the settlement was enveloped in bright light . booming explosions reverberated for meeny seconds afterwouds while a large mushrooming kloud forced its way skywould . neilson had just enough time to pull the connection between the molten mass of the maine reactor and the secondary power plants .if he hadent then thay too might have fussed from the tremendas feedback which would have left the settlement defences. the protective umbrella of the force feild had disintergrated completly and left the settlement wide open to actack.

This is hard work to transcribe accurately, believe me. I don't think I can take any more, and I'm sure you can't. Still, a few brief highlights from the next few pages:

"fires flared up sll over the ruins and smock hung around the torn and jaged remains" ... "the first of the leasions were just comeing up to the wall when they sorre the aliens" ... "the defenders of the compound let loos with everything they had" ... "the leasions dropped lick flys" ... "everywhere the leasions were forced to tack cover in eny lickly spot. for thoes court in the open their bodys lay strewn across the ground either ded or dying" ... "when they finally advanced into the compound there was only a mass of rubbly"

Luckily I no longer have any record of who wrote this masterpiece (which for some reason Gollancz turned down). As I recollect the author's name was Bobby Oldsock, or something like that.

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If you've fully recovered from the previous page it's probably time for an article, and just to prove that TAPPEN is utterly free of male chauvinist bias the very first outside contributor will be a woman. Not any woman, it must be said, but one who seems to be around the house quite a lot. Some day I must ask her what she's up to.

Not long ago several of us went to a science fiction convention in Leeds. What follows is not so much a convention report as a series of somewhat dazed impressions...

YORCON II PHOTO ALBUM, 1981

by Chris Atkinson

Instead of a boring old con report, I've sent along a few snapshots, all moving, all talking, all having-a-great-time. Here goes then...

Flash

This is obviously the M1, a majestic vista of concrete and potholes sweeping off towards the North. We are being overtaken by a large van, mysteriously labelled "Rubella Distribution Ltd" (free epidemics?), closely followed by a lorry bearing the legend "Cable Glands" -- clearly a rush delivery of spare parts for Rob Holdstock. Just as we are about to be seized with dread at these vile portents a huge tanker passes, obviously en route to the Dragonara Hotel, with the words "Beer in Transit" emblazoned on its ample side. Thus cheered we continue on our journey.

Flash

Thursday night at 11:00, and a heap of weary bodies litter the floor of the bar. This is a somewhat inauspicious start to a convention. Perhaps the Dragonara are pumping sedatives into the atmosphere in the hope of a quiet weekend.

Flash

Friday night, and here are a group of disreputable looking fans in a local Italian restaurant. On my left is a man closely resembling the kind of sales rep who always drives a Ford Cortina; he is rubbing up against my knee. He insists on giving me his visiting card. Surely he can't really be called Skimm? And what's this about coming from Goole? This can't be reality; it must be the fudge I ate.

Flash

We're on the way back to the hotel and I notice my jaw is tight. My chest is tight. My back is tight. My body is shaking. My teeth are knocking together. What sort of disease is this? I mentally flick through cancer, heart attack, senility, falling in love and paranoid schizophrenia before realizing that I'm cold. It's going to be one of those nights.

Flash

I recognize this man from somewhere. Yes, it's Rob Hansen. "Hello, Rob!"

I think I'm acting OK, if a bit extrovert, so why is he giving me those funny looks? We have an interesting conversation about what we would do if we went to bed with someone and found out right at the last minute that they were the same sex as ourselves. We both agree that by that point we wouldn't care less. I decide this is probably a good fantasy for people who feel guilty about their homosexual leanings. Malcolm Edwards then makes his way towards us. He's leaning a bit, too. He wants to know what we're talking about but for some reason we can only giggle. Communication with Malcolm is impossible. There seems to be a fault in his brain. When I tell him so he looks quite upset and goes away.

Rob is continuing to give me funny looks. I begin to wonder what he's making of our conversation, because it's making no sense at all to me. It's probably time to slip casually away.

Flash

Here's Greg Pickersgill, looking lecherous as usual. I tell him that Rob and I have just had a good fantasy. He tells me another one which has something to do with tongues and sheeps anuses. I begin to wonder if something traumatic happened during Greg's potty training, and assure him that his fantasy is nothing like as good as Rob's and mine. "Rob's and your what?" he says, and he gives me a funny look too. Perhaps it's a conspiracy.

Flash

The pictures are getting out of order now. This could be any evening. It's Brian Parker telling me once again what he and Terry think is wrong with my personality. I consider telling him what I think is wrong with theirs but can't concentrate for long enough.

Flash

Peter Pinto looks the sympathetic type. Unfortunately when I approach him, he fixes me with an intense stare and says, "If you wish to recharge your energy cells far away from this confusing throng of people we see all around us, and if you need to feel the security of knowing that you are in the company of people of like mind, you will find such people in room 216."

My mind goes blank. "Say that again," I ask. He does. I wish he hadn't. I begin to realize that one of us is a dangerous lunatic. I'm not sure which one, but decide that I'll move away, just to be on the safe side.

The safe side of what?

Flash

I can't resist this one. I'm sitting with Rochelle Reynolds discussing Deep Things. Greg Pickersgill ambles over and gives Rochelle what he fondly imagines to be a sexually devastating look.

"Can I bite your left tit," he asks her.

"What?" she says.

"He wants to bite your left tit," I explain, wanting to keep the fascinating conversation going.

"Oh. Well, no thank you," she replies, smiling in a Bright Tolerant Young American way. Greg leers again, and I can hear him muttering away under his breath about various possible interconnections of Rochelle's flesh with his own. Suddenly he grunts, "You have to use a pillow."

"What?" says Rochelle again, looking as though she suspects an insult.

"A pillow," says Greg. "To get the right angle."

I'm beginning to get the drift of what he's on about, although Rochelle is obviously wondering if he's still referring to her left tit.

"Oh, er, Rochelle," I murmur, "I think he's talking about anal intercourse."

"What?" she repeats.

Oh bloody hell, this is silly. Greg is beginning to pant and mumble all at the same time. I try not to listen. Suddenly Rochelle moves back against the wall very quickly.

"You put it where?" she screeches, nose wrinkling in utter disgust.

Flash

Here I am trying to buy a drink from Reception (well, it did look like a bar) and being rescued by Colin Greenland and his friend, who are inseparable. I'm trying to tell Colin why I didn't go to his party and getting more and more embarrassed. In an effort to change the subject I empty the complete contents of my handbag on to Colin's lap. He makes a comment to his friend about Proust.

"That's why I didn't come to your party!" I exclaim. "You'd all have been sitting round talking about Proust!" I hurriedly start gathering up my old Barclaycard slips and empty matchboxes before they are tainted by intellect.

"But why shouldn't I talk about Proust? I've got a degree in English Literature," he replies. I am sure this is a thinly veiled insult to my intelligence, so having stuffed the last 1977 hotel receipt into my handbag I hastily leave in search of less demanding conversations.

Flash

Here's David Pringle getting his knickers in a terrible twist over the fudge and everything. He seems to be under the impression that whatever he says to anyone is a gross insult. Having said "Hello", he then goes into a lengthy and tortuous explanation of how he didn't really mean to say such a dreadful thing, it's just that he's not quite himself this evening, and so on. At one point on Sunday evening I had to intervene between David and an extremely puzzled neo who probably wanted to know some esoteric fact about J.G. Ballard. Instead he got a ten minute discourse on the dreadful insult Pringle thought he might have uttered in his first sentence, followed by an apology for the apology, and if I hadn't turned up they'd probably still be there to this day floating in a sea of Pringle's remorse.

Flash

Rob Holdstock had to feature sooner or later. Here he is, hotly pursuing a glossy-lipped female while denying he's ever set eyes on her. Reluctantly he stops to talk.

"Oh God," he wails, "Sheila is incredibly randy at this convention. Oh God, what is she doing with that Dutchman? Oh God---" He tails off, cable glands visibly wilting, but soon cheers up at the sight of a passing Chrissie Pearson.

"Must go and talk business," he explains, as he follows her extremely closely across the room.

Flash

This is a strange one. Here I am with Sheila Holdstock (minus Dutchman). We're standing at the bar, swaying gently. I think it's Saturday night, and for some reason we both have a strong urge to touch people. Unfortunately there are few

people around whom we want to touch.

"Oh well," says Sheila, smiling sweetly. "There's nothing else for it. Your room or mine?"

Flash

Another one of Pringle. He's fixing me with a very odd look.

"Why are you here?" he asks. What does he mean? Why is he here? Why are we all here? Whence fandom? Whence the universe? Is the mystery of life revealed in a sheep's anus? On the other hand, perhaps he thinks I should be outside organizing revolutions for the Socialist Workers Party. To get on to safer ground I tell him about the fantasy I had with Rob Hansen. Pringle likes it. This pleases me considerably after Greg's disappointing response. Unfortunately David then returns to asking me why I'm here. Perhaps I'll tell him one day -- if I ever work it out myself.

Flash

Anne Pringle approaches, the Were-Whale of the Dragonara (Pete Garrett) in tow. Little does she know that on the stroke of thirteen o'clock he turns into a killer whale and wreaks havoc throughout fandom. At the moment, however, he is in manly form and flushed with my success with David Pringle I tell him The Fantasy. Unfortunately he's not at all happy about imagining an erotic scene with a woman who turns about to be a man (however attractive), and seems quite annoyed with me for leading him into such a naughty thought. Later I find out that he's a clinical psychologist. I always knew there was something peculiar about clinical psychologists.

Flash

Here's one of Simone, Brian, Malcolm and myself at the banquet. The reason we look so friendly is that the hotel have tried to squeeze ten people around a table for six. The others at our table all seem to be Mormons. Malcolm is looking miserable, because being well brought up, when the After Eight mints came he offered them to everyone else first, and then found that the little envelope left for him had nothing in it.

Flash

Sad, really. All the rest of the film came out very dark, with a few indistinguishable figures huddling in the background. Perhaps they were overexposed --- or maybe my camera knew that the world is not yet ready for the Whole Truth about Yorcon II.

--- Chris Atkinson

* * * * *

"Is that it?"

"That's all."

"But it's all drugs and sexual fantasies. What about science fiction? I want to know about the speeches and the films, not about what a lot of bloody degenerates were up to in the bar."

"Well, there was Tom Disch's speech. He showed that science fiction was a form of religion, with convention-goers the devout followers."

"That sounds more like it."

"Then he appointed himself its prophet and called for contributions from the audience. He didn't realize D. West had got there first."

"Is that all?"

"Well, Ian Watson kept trying to politicize the convention. Lots of people got very upset when he and Graham James got a motion passed in support of unilateral disarmament. Doreen Rogers threatened to sue if it was made public. Disch was much impressed by Graham's performance: he said afterwards that he'd have a great future in politics."

"Because of his passionate defence of his principles?"

"No, because he's so manipulative and devious."

"What else?"

"Well, Chris doesn't mention the dance which followed the Fancy Dress. All eyes were on the Guests of Honour. Tom Disch's dancing was incredible to behold -- apparently he goes to regular classes. It reminded me of the balletic hippos in Fantasia, disco style. Ian Watson, on the other hand, dances like a paraplegic fairy. When they were on the floor together there was always a strong possibility that he'd twitch in the wrong direction and be crushed... underfoot by Disch."

"What about you? You're still into science fiction."

"Well, I was in the bookroom or stoned out of my head (or both) most of the time. I was having these fascinating conversations with people where halfway through a sentence I'd realize I had completely forgotten what I was talking about. However, I knew what the remainder of the sentence was going to be, so I said it anyway, wondering what the hell it meant. Then, incredibly, people would answer as though it had made sense. I also helped out in one of the auctions and got a bit carried away when I had to dispose of a copy of Number of the Beast. Nobody wanted to buy it, so I reasoned I could raise more money by getting people to contribute 10p each to watch me destroy it. Not content with this, I volunteered to attempt to eat it in return for further contributions."

"And did you."

"Well, I chewed a couple of pages, but I couldn't get anywhere. It isn't just unreadable, it's inedible too."

"Good convention, was it?"

"Well, not as good as Yorcon I, I thought, but I had a good time."

* * * * *

Chris doesn't smoke, except very occasionally, though as the above may have made clear she does drink and do Other Things. So it's no surprise that her full name (i.e. Christine Atkinson) anagrammatizes as "shan't risk nicotine". This leads me on to one of my pet obsessions. (Notice how the clever editor bridges from one subject to the next.)

The thing about a good anagram is that it should reveal some basic truth about the person whose name is being rearranged. Thus when we see Peter R. Weston turning before our eyes into Wetter Person we sense the hand of predestination. Similarly, while our thoughts are turned Birmingham-wards, the knowledge that Rog Peyton becomes Grey On Top surely has the sense of inevitability.

Closer to home, I don't know Alan Dorey's birth sign, but A Randy Leo must suggest a clue. Robert P. Holdstock's legendary accomplishments must often have sent him to seek medical aid with the cry, "Tool throbs, Dr Peck." Peter D. Nicholls's life has been blighted since I revealed to him that his name concealed, like the worm coiled within the bud, Colin Lester Ph.D -- not only his mortal

enemy, but with a doctorate to boot. Simone Walsh's impatient complaint -- Man, is he slow! -- should perhaps be taken to heart by Brian. Gregory Pickersgill offers the gnomic but somehow appropriate Grey Pig Kills Grocer. Linda Pickersgill, on the other hand, produces the interesting information that I, Pringle, Lick Lads -- something not heretofore known about the current editor of Foundation.

In the professional sf world, Ian Watson's heart-rending cry "I want a son!" could only indicate a man who had his vasectomy too soon. Exploration of these fertile pastures has not really begun, but I leave you to guess which writer's stories might be said to describe "a shrill, neon L.A.".

What of the editor of TAPPEN? His name throws up the imprecation "Screw mad old Mal" -- a feeling probably echoed at this point by most readers.

* * * * *

Chris Evans is not an easy man to rearrange, but we can't hold that against him as it is he who provided TAPPEN with its name. Titling fanzines is always the hardest part, and I had been stuck for months, if not years. This one seems absolutely appropriate. A few years ago I had in mind to do a fanzine called SMEGMA, a controversial little item which would have been subtitled "the fanzine that gets under fandom's foreskin". TAPPEN doesn't yield a subtitle in quite the same easy way, as few of its readers are polar bears, but I've decided it should have one anyway. TAPPEN will henceforth be known as "the fanzine that Knows Best". You had better believe it.

By an incredible coincidence the very same Chris Evans mentioned in the preceding paragraph has also contributed an article to this issue of TAPPEN. As Christopher -- or, more appropriately, C.D. -- Evans he is the author of Capella's Golden Eyes (published by Faber here, and forthcoming from Ace, I think, in the U.S.A.) (Incidentally, why do all these Faber first novels feature parts of the body -- there was Holdstock's Eye Among the Blind too, not to mention Chris Priest's Indoctrinaire with the big ear sticking out of the wall on the jacket.) In fandom, however, he's known as Madman Evans for his extrovertly manic all-singing, all-dancing drunken performances. Chris's original title for what follows was, we both agreed, not very good, but neither of us could come up with a suitable alternative. After typing the other Chris (Atkinson's) piece, though, I've come up with something which seems appropriate and which will properly punish anyone who hasn't been reading carefully by being incomprehensible.

YOU PUT IT WHERE?

by Chris Evans

"Don't forget you're getting £5 for this," the girl who was conducting the experiment told me, sitting me down in a chair. Although she was about five years younger than me, she was one of those awesomely efficient and organized types whom I always find intimidating. She proceeded to drape blue paper

towelling down my front, explaining that I'd probably dribble a bit and that I didn't want to mess up my shirt front, did I? No, I told her, I most certainly didn't, but what I really wanted to know was if this was going to hurt at all. She gave me a scornful look and said, "Of course not."

"But you said something about zapping my tongue with an electric current."

"A small one," she retorted. "All you'll feel is a mild throbbing and perhaps a slight sourness, like sucking the top of a battery. I want you to tell me exactly when you begin to sense it."

She had already taken my hand and had daubed my palm with a saline solution before putting a metal electrode into it. The electrode was connected to an ammeter, and I was somewhat relieved to see that it was graduated in milliamps. Then she took a "sample" from a tray and told me to stick out my tongue. The sample was white, waxy and shaped like a round sweet with a dimple in the top. This was duly placed on my tongue. I was under strict instructions not to suck it or swallow any saliva. Finally she put a second electrode into my other hand, which I was to apply to my tongue on her command.

We waited for five minutes, and my mouth slowly filled with a slimy white glop, some of which eventually began to ooze out of the corners of my mouth and run down my chin. The girl waited until it was about a millimetre from trickling under my shirt collar before leaning forward and swabbing me with a Kleenex. It was like being six months old again.

After consulting her stopwatch, she declared that the experiment would now commence. I touched the tip of the second electrode to the part of my tongue where the sample was resting, and the girl slowly began to turn a dial.

"Let me know as soon as you can feel the current," she reminded me.

---About thirty seconds passed, and then I detected a tingling sensation.

"Ummgghh," I went.

"You can feel it?"

"Ummgghh."

"Is it pulsing or continuous?"

"Ummgghh."

She fiddled with a switch. "What about now?"

"Ummgghh."

"Continuous?"

"Ummgghh."

"Good." She wrote down a reading, then said, "You can spit it out now."

I spat.

There was orange squash in a polystyrene cup. This was the nicest part. I gargled the first mouthful, then drank the rest.

"That wasn't so bad after all," I said. A snip at £5.

"We haven't finished yet. That one was a blank, to give us a threshold reading. Now we give you another sample containing a local anaesthetic. It's the same procedure. This time we'll need a higher current before you'll be able to detect it. By comparing the score with the blank, that will give us an indication of the anaesthetic effect of the sample."

Very neat, I thought, duly submitting to the second sample. These formulation chemists certainly know how to contrive a simple and effective experiment. Even if it meant drooling like a baby for another five minutes, I was at least furthering the cause of science in some small way. And the girl gave me a fresh bib of blue paper towelling before we began again.

The second sample was less pleasant, because even after I'd spat it out the anaesthetic it contained left a numb spot on my tongue.

"They certainly seem to work," I said. "But they're a bit greasy for mouth ulcer tablets."

The girl looked distinctly sheepish. This was appropriate, for her surname, as I recall, was Lamb. "They're not exactly mouth ulcer tablets," she said.

"But that's what you told me they were."

She gave me an apologetic smile. "I had to, otherwise you might not have gone through with it. They're not exactly for oral application."

I waited for more.

"We're testing them in the mouth because it's the most convenient approximation to the actual bodily orifice."

I thought about this one for a moment. What other bodily orifices are there? The nostrils? The ear-holes? The ---

"You're kidding?"

She grinned and shook her head, then openly laughed.

"But they're the wrong shape," I said.

"We used that shape so that they'd sit flat on the tongue." She produced a black plastic bag from which she removed a handful of objects of the same white waxen material. Only these were bullet-shaped. The real article.

It was one of those moments I would later look back on as a turning point in my life.

The above incident took place while I was working in the R&D department of Beecham Products, a pharmaceutical company based in Brentford. My official job title was Pilot Plant Graduate, which has nothing to do with aviation or botany. The Pilot Plant contained scaled-down versions of factory machines such as tablet presses, mixers and coating pans, and its place in the research and development programme lay midway between the laboratory bench and the factory floor. In other words, if a new product were being formulated (or, more commonly, an existing one reformulated), this would first be done by chemists and pharmacists working on a test-tube or beaker scale. Then, if subsequent storage tests showed that the product was suitably stable, a larger batch (of tablets, or cough medicine, or indigestion powder, or whatever) would be prepared in the

Pilot Plant using methods which were designed to simulate full factory production as closely as possible.

It might seem odd that such an intermediate step is necessary, but it is, for some strange things can happen to pharmaceutical products if only minor changes are made to the original procedure for preparation. For example, you can dissolve paracetamol powder in alcohol and then mix this with water to produce a clear solution; but if you try to dissolve the paracetamol in water and then add the alcohol you end up with a cloudy, lumpy mess which would scare off regular users of Night Nurse for ever. (Incidentally, Night Nurse contains about 18% pure alcohol by volume, which makes it a pretty potent concoction; but any hardened drinkers thinking of switching to it should be warned that it also contains cough suppressants and other nasties which would do less pleasant and possibly permanent things to your brain while you were getting pissed.) Even using a different type of mixer from the one originally employed might mysteriously cause your liquid vitamin tonic to separate out into unsightly layers or once-firm tablets to crumble to dust in your hands.

Those are just a few examples of the kind of arcane knowledge I picked up at Beechams. I learned lots of other important things too, like what the difference was between a tablet and a pill, how you should always check that a liquid mixer is turned down to its lowest possible speed before switching it on (otherwise the liquid being mixed has a tendency to erupt with remarkable violence into your face) and how you could make interesting pretzel shapes by dropping spatulas into heavy-duty dry mixers. I learned to say things like "fluidized bed drier" and "topical and systemic effect" with effortless confidence, and would substitute "acetylsalicylic acid" for "aspirin" and "ascorbic acid" for "vitamin C" when I wanted to impress people with my pharmaceutical knowledge (like now). I think the most important discovery I made during my time at Beechams was how not to commit suicide. If I ever become so depressed as to want to end it all, I shall not do by taking an overdose of paracetamol tablets. For such a commonly available analgesic these are truly nasty if swallowed by the bottleful. For some days afterwards you feel fine, and might decide that life is worth living after all. But it would be too late, for in the meantime irreversible necrosis of the liver has set in and you die slowly, painfully and inexorably.

However, despite all my posturing, I never really became a company man who delighted in his work and would put the welfare of Beechams above all else. Halfway through university, when I was already embarked upon a chemistry degree, I had decided that I really wanted to be a writer, and from that time on I had seen my formal educational qualifications as no more than a means of keeping me in some kind of job until I learned to write well enough to be able to sell my fiction on a regular basis. During my last year at Beechams I was spending three or four hours most evenings writing a novel, which meant that I was pretty knackered when I stumbled into work each morning and had little enthusiasm for preparing gallons of mouthwash or churning out laxative tablets by the thousand.

At the beginning of 1978 it became clear that our department would be moving from Brentford to Leatherhead in Surrey that summer. Those who did not wish to move would be offered voluntary redundancy. I certainly fell into that

category, for I fully expected to finish my novel that year and was entertaining the hope that I would sell it for a vast sum and embark upon a lucrative career as a freelance writer. In which happy event I would need to be based in London, I decided. And besides, most of my friends lived in or around the capital, and Leatherhead looked so boring and blandly suburban that moving there would have felt like retiring.

But what if I couldn't sell the book when I'd finished it? After all, I'd been writing fiction for eight years and hadn't sold a single thing, so the omens were hardly auspicious. Maybe I was deluding myself that I had any writing ability whatsoever. But on the other hand, I was bored to distraction with my job, and was convinced that writing was the only vocation which I would be able to pursue with any degree of conviction. Throughout the first few months of 1978 I wavered between the two extremes of boldly telling them to stuff their job and meckly submitting to the move.

I might never have plucked up the courage to leave if it hadn't been for the clinical trial I've described above. Every so often members of the staff were roped in to test a new or reformulated product. If the test was time-consuming or unpleasant money would be offered, and since I am as mercenary as the next person I usually leapt at the chance to earn a few extra pounds. In my 2¹/₂ years at Beechams I spent quite a bit of time being smeared with Germolene and rubbed with Eiliman's Embrocation; I'd sampled endless cups of Venos Cough Medicine and chrysanthemum-flavoured Eno's; I'd chewed banana-flavoured calcium tablets, liquorice-flavoured laxatives, and had blood samples extracted from my arm at hourly intervals during the clinical trials of a new aspirin formulation. To be asked to test a few "mouth ulcer tablets" seemed quite routine.

I remember sitting there, spitting orange squash into the sink and staring at the waxen bullets from the plastic bag. In those days I had a rather pretentious literary imagination, and I recalled a line from a Robert Coover story: "Have I walked the earth and come here?"

It was at this moment that I really decided to leave Beechams and never return. It is not a decision I have ever regretted. I completed and sold my novel later that year, and have managed to struggle by on the meagre income from my writing ever since. And while it is not a distinction in which I take great pride, I can at least claim that I am possibly the only freelance writer in the world who knows what a suppository tastes like.

--- Chris Evans

* * * * *

It occurs to me that what with one thing and another readers may by now be getting the impression that TAPPIEN is a fanzine with an anal fixation. Let me hasten to deny this. I can't speak for the contributors, but the editors' fixations are directed elsewhere. I mean, sure, yes, I do collect science fiction. I do (or did) have rooms filled with thousands of books and magazines that I never intend to read. But that's because I'm an sf historian and scholar, I tell you. Anal retention just doesn't come into it at all.

Another page, another topic. Some of you will want to skip this bit, because the subject is the Hugo Awards, in which I continue to take a masochistic sort of interest. What sparked me off this time was Norman Spinrad's column in the latest issue of LOCUS (June). Here he says, apropos of the novel category:

"This year's Hugo nominations are not only an unprecedented disgrace to the honor of science fiction but one of an insidiously pernicious species.

"No less than 3 out of 5 nominees are sequels to previously proven products. Of the other two, one received the highest advance in the history of the field at the time, and the other still probably holds the genre record for ad budget ... Another sf editor has privately opined that only one of the Hugo nominees might possibly be said to have true literary ambition, and even this, we were able to agree, is a borderline case."

To save you looking it up, the novels on the ballot are BEYOND THE BLUE EVENT HORIZON, LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE, THE RINGWORLD ENGINEERS, THE SNOW QUEEN and WIZARD. VALENTINE'S was the book which got the record advance; SNOW QUEEN is (by elimination) the one with the big advertising campaign behind it. The others are sequels, in two instances (Niven and Pohl) to novels which won both the Hugo and the Nebula. What has really got Spinrad and others exercised over this is the absence from the ballot of the Nebula winner TIMESCAPE, which -- without disrespect to Pohl and Silverberg, both good writers at less than full stretch in the examples under consideration here -- towers head and shoulders above any of the five that made it. Spinrad goes on to develop a thesis (with which I don't wholly agree, but that's neither here nor there) about debasement of publishing standards, and the dominance of the packaging and profiteering mentality over any vestige of literary sensibility. The implicit line of his argument is that the Hugos will come to reflect popularity in the same way that TV ratings do, and will be equally divorced from any concept of quality.

So what's new, you ask? How many novels have Ballard and Disch and John Crowley and M. John Harrison ever had on the Hugo ballot? While bitter tears are wept over TIMESCAPE who notices that John Sladek's RODERICK -- a novel of comparable literary ambition which had the misfortune, so far as the Hugos go, to be published first in the UK -- also failed to make the list? It has always been difficult for good work to gain recognition in popularity polls.

Well, what may be different (it is implied) is that where previously it was difficult, now it seems impossible. This has less to do with publishing standards, though, than with the size of the worldcon and the number of Hugo nominations now received. Taking figures from Locus it appears that the five novels on the ballot received between 73 and 135 nominations. A novel could receive 72 nominations and not make the ballot. That's a lot: in fact, 72 nominations would be enough to lead the field in seven of the other ten categories (the exceptions being best editor -- where there are so few contenders whose names have wide public prominence that it's no surprise that the five on the ballot all got a lot of nominations; best fanzine, which is a surprise; and best dramatic presentation, which is the category that now

now attracts most nominations and votes, since people who read also watch films, though the reverse is by no means necessarily true). Given these figures it's no surprise that *TIMESCAPE*, which didn't have a bookclub edition or a magazine serialization or a paperback edition available, failed to get enough support. I'd be prepared to bet that it did get over 50 nominations -- enough to get in on the ballot in any other category apart from best editor.

This takes me back to 1979, where from my vantage point at the adjacent desk at North East London Polytechnic I watched Dave Pringle counting the Hugo nominations for *Seacon*. Here the novel which didn't make it was Michael Moorcock's *GLORIANA*, which wasn't in paperback, hadn't even been published in the USA, but nevertheless got more than 50 nominations. Enough for any other category, but not enough for the best novel ballot. In fact *Seacon* also put out an 'Honourable Mention' list of 5 novels which shared this distinction (the purpose of doing so being solely to give Moorcock's novel what tiny recognition we could). Is it possible to do anything about this situation? Well, of course it is. One could, for instance, simply change the rules so that the final ballot in any category was automatically expanded to embrace any items which fell outside the top five but which received more than a certain number of nominations (say 50, for the sake of argument). This would, as things stand at present, only affect the novel and (conceivably) editor categories. You would then have a ballot with perhaps 10 novels -- a bit unwieldy, but manageable. Any *TAPPEN* readers who are members of *Denvention* can feel free to propose this amendment.

But doesn't this sound strangely familiar? Haven't we heard before these arguments about categories becoming unrepresentative, about good work not widely circulated ceasing to stand a chance? It's a new version of the age-old arguments over the fan Hugos! The only difference is that novels are generally available and time (and paperback editions) will enable them to reach the wide market, whereas most fanzines by their nature only have a small and limited circulation -- probably 100-300 in most cases. Thus *LOCUS* and *SFR* always win, and Dick Geis gets a shelf-full of Best Fan Writer Hugos, while the likes of Dave Langford, though they make the ballot, go unrewarded.

The argument gets another airing in the latest *SFR*, in which Dick Geis replies to a letter from Mike Glyer with the assertion that it's content and style rather than circulation which wins him and his fanzine their Hugos. Well, up to a point I'd agree. If *SFR* (and *LOCUS*, and *STARSHIP*) all only circulated 500 copies, to bring them more or less in line with fanzines in general, I could still see it winning a lot of Hugos, because it is a good sf fanzine. Although the standard of his outside reviewers is mediocre (to put it mildly), Geis manages to obtain a range of interesting material, put it together in a distinctive (and distinctively fanzine-like) way, and generally gives the impression that *SFR* is *Where It's At* in science fiction fandom. He's done it for years, and the circulation has never seemed to have much effect on the quality one way or the other. *SFR* is as it is because Geis is a good editor. (*STARSHIP*, conversely, depends heavily on its glossy package -- which demands a larger circulation -- and although it has good articles sometimes, it is not a magazine which I ever pick up and read straight through in the way I do with *SFR*.)

Be all this as it may, Geis's belief that he'd still win in a fair com-

petition (and my belief that he may well be right) doesn't alter the fact that at present he's winning in unfair competition. Here the case of Bob Shaw is instructive. Despite all the praise heaped on his fanwriting in the past Bob never made the Hugo ballot until 1979, when the Worldcon was held in Britain and a lot of British fans nominated for the awards (Geis, you may recall, was the only non-Briton on the ballot). Bob duly won. In 1980 he was on the ballot again and, again, a comparatively large number of British fans were registered for the convention (the Noreascon programme book gives the figure as 90 -- not large in comparison with the overall attendance, but certainly more than enough to get somebody on a ballot in one of the fan categories). Most of these may be considered to be fanzine fans to some degree, because British fandom still isn't so large that the dichotomy between fanzine and convention fans exists to any large degree -- at least, not among those involved enough to be interested in an American worldcon. And Bob won again. This year the convention is in Denver, there are probably (I don't have the figures, but I'd be amazed if I was wrong) very few British fans registered, and Bob did not make the ballot (yes, I know Dave Langford did). The conclusion is clear that it has been British fandom which made Bob a contender. But he couldn't have won on their votes, particularly last year. No. He won, surely, because he was the best-known writer on the ballot -- because Bob Shaw, science fiction writer, is more famous than Dick Geis, fanzine editor (and writer). This shouldn't diminish those awards; he deserves them. But his two wins reinforce the point that the problem with the fan Hugos for the last several years has been that the informed electorate only forms a small minority of the total electorate, who when they fill in their ballots are quite likely to vote for a name they know, regardless of their ability actually to judge the relative merits of the contenders. (884 people voted for best fan writer at Noreascon, incidentally.)

What can be done about this situation? Well, clearly, nothing, except scrapping the awards. But if you start with the fan Hugos where do you stop? As we've seen, the award for best novel is now being acknowledged to be devalued in a comparable way. Where would we be left if they were scrapped too? What would be the point of holding on to the other categories? Maybe we'd end up with no Hugos at all. Now that would be an interesting idea...

* * * * *

I was sitting around minding my own business one evening not so long ago when the phone rang. I picked it up. The call was from a phone box, and after the pips finished I heard a woman's voice at the other end.

"Is that Malcolm?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Have you changed your name from McLaren?"

"What?"

"Did you use to be the Sex Pistols' manager?"

"No."

"Oh ... I must have the wrong Malcolm."

"I'm afraid so."

She hung up, leaving me to contemplate possibly the least explicable phone call I've ever had. If only I'd caught on fast enough to play her along, asking "Who put you on to me?" or something similarly capable of being misconstrued as agreement, I might now be embarked on a new career as fast-talking manager and all-round posy wanker-about-town.

* * * * *

As is the case with many fans of my generation and later, rock music has always been at least as integral to my life as science fiction. Back in 1971 Graham Charnock and I even planned to start a rock fanzine (mostly a ruse to get ourselves lots of free records). We were before our time, evidently. The record companies all ignored our wheedling letters and the project was stillborn. Perhaps in a parallel universe I might have gone on to become a successful rock writer, started my own band, and become as famous (and rich) as Bob Geldof or Chrissie Hynde. (This is one of my more improbable fantasies.)

I'm also fascinated by lists -- people's favourite books, films, records, sexual positions and so forth. So putting a) and b) together I decided that I would like to make a regular feature in TAPPEN of fans' Desert Island Discs. A word of explanation to overseas fans: Desert Island Discs is a British radio programme which has been going out every week since before the wheel was invented (roughly). The format is simple: a celebrity of some sort is interviewed and asked to choose the eight records he or she would like to have if they were marooned on a desert island. It makes for a neat combination of chat and music, with the added bonus that the choice should tell you something about the person that you didn't know before. For some I've had a fantasy of doing something similar on the fan programme at a convention, instead of the straightforward interviews/chats with prominent fans that regularly do happen. I'd be fascinated by people's choices and their reasons.

So, anyway, I decided to do it here. The disadvantage is that you can't hear the music (though I had another fantasy, which I swiftly suppressed, of preparing an accompanying cassette which could be sent at cost to anyone interested), but that doesn't matter too much. The reasons each author gives for the choices are what should make it interesting. To set the thing in motion I first approached Greg Pickersgill, chiefly because of all the fans I know he's the one to whom music seems most vital. After much whinging and griping he eventually came up with the goods (though he chose ten rather than eight -- well, I don't have to fit everything into half an hour, so I'm not bothered.) TAPPEN would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to contribute to this series.

Greg had the idea that I should preface the piece with something about him -- ostensibly because he's now one of the dead old farts of fandom and everybody seeing his name will chorus "Greg who?", but actually, if you ask me, because he's just as egotistical as the rest of us and likes to read about

himself in fanzines. I first met Greg at the 1971 Eastercon (over ten years ago, by God) and since he isn't 30 till later this year simple arithmetic tells me that he must have been 19 at the time. However, he'd been in fandom for several years already whereas I, though by then an elderly 21, was a relative newcomer (see above). Chris Priest had told me how to recognize Greg at the convention -- "He's the one who looks like Tony Blackburn," he told me. Unfortunately in the year since the previous convention he had grown his hair and become the shaggy lump which he remains to this day. I'm still waiting for him to cut the hair and shave off the beard so I can see if Chris was right. He has edited a few fanzines in his time including FOULER with Leroy Kettle (seminal), RITBLAT (didn't quite mesh) and STOP BREAKING DOWN (excellent). He is renowned for his perpetually sunny disposition.

He is standing for TAFT in 1982 and TAPPEY, the fanzine that Knows Best, is supporting his candidature. Vote Pickersgill for TAFT in 1982! (And Avedon Carol in 1983.) You have been told.

NOT EXACTLY DESERT ISLAND DISCS

by Greg Pickersgill

What we have here isn't quite what I was asked to do. I soon realized I couldn't do the regulation sort of Desert Island Discs selection, founded on fairly precise memories of circumstances and events, because records for me don't operate quite like that. It's almost as if my feelings regarding music work on a subtly different level than reality, more related to internalized emotions and fantasy events rather than anything occurring in the outside world. Therefore all these records fundamentally relate to ideas and feelings within me, rather than things and events that have happened around me, although there is inevitably overspill in both directions. Naturally there are records in my life that relate directly to particular events and times and places, that always sum up memories good and bad whenever I hear or play them, but somehow they're seldom the records I'd want to be trapped in a box with for any length of time. I like them, but....

So what I did here, then, was imagine I'd been given a few minutes before being wrenched off this familiar dull soil to some indefinite location far from record store or radio station. In those five minutes I had to select ten records that I could hope would give me lasting pleasure or satisfaction. It wasn't a hard choice, and I think I could well have easily chosen eight of the ten within the first minute, they were that obvious. Almost all of them have at least one track I find specifically valuable, all for very similar reasons as you'll see.

I have fairly well-defined ideas of what makes a good record -- a poor song will kill any arrangement for me, no matter how clever or well played, whereas an insightful, witty or truthful lyric -- especially if there is some subtle narrative line or representation of life as I understand it to be lived -- will triumph over all but the most cloddish musicianship. The only people who surprise me more than those who never listen to the words are those

who like records despite their appalling songs. I like all music, as long as it's good.

1. DAVID BOWIE -- Young Americans

Of all Bowie's albums this is the least acclaimed -- epithets like "plastic soul" were common in reviews at the time of release, and Bowie himself seems to think of it as one of his weaker moments. Now I like Bowie a whole lot, but of all his albums this is the one I find most completely enjoyable -- perverse, maybe, but true. Anyway, if for no other reason I'd snatch it because of "Somebody Up There Likes Me", a piece of inspirational music if ever there was one, and quite likely my favourite single track by anyone at all, anytime, anywhere. The sort of music one finds genuinely spirit-raising is terribly subjective, of course, but this is It for me. Certainly the album as a whole, including this track, is smart, neat, and perfectly arranged -- and was called cold for its pains, as well as for its obvious links to the disco music of its time -- but beneath that surface glass beats a mighty heart. Which is as it should be, for Gospel is after all the roots of Soul, which is, as any fool knows, the roots of disco, and what Bowie has adroitly done here is pull the ends of the chain together and with some ingenious invisible mending given us a true circle around the sun. Not only is "Somebody Up There Likes Me" a brilliant arrangement with perfect instrumentation and voices, with terrific little touches like the testifying bass vocal interjections along the chorus line, but it's also maybe Bowie's best song ever (given subjective enthusiasm). I mean, I don't necessarily believe that there's "Somebody up there likes me/Keeps my soul in tune/Makes me stronger for you" and so on, but hellfire, it's a nice idea, and the vocal is so tinged with a genuine, gospel-sounding, unbearably poignant hopefulness that it makes me wish it was true. Just the thing to keep some sense of self and heart and perspective and warmth in a lonely place. Honestly, I think it's a great record, and if I couldn't take it with me it wouldn't matter too much, because I play it in my head all the time anyway.

2. and 3. TIM BUCKLEY -- Greetings From L.A. and Look At The Fool

Five years or so ago I'd hardly heard of Tim Buckley. Then he died and Graham Charnock wrote about him in an excellent little fanzine called Vibrator. It sounded so interesting that I went out of my way to get to hear some of Buckley's material. And here I am years later taking two of his albums off into some dark space with you. Who says fandom doesn't give you something?

Anyway, these two are similar to Bowie's Young Americans in that they're generally down-graded by hardcore Buckley fans as being too commercially oriented or somesuch. As I find the rather precious singer/songwriterism of most of his earlier albums hard to swallow, and have not had a hell of a whole lot more luck with the determinedly avant-garde atmosphere of Lorca or Star-sailor either (I like them, but I'm not sure how much) I'm inclined to say that Buckley knew what he was at when he made these records, and as he isn't around to disclaim them I'm willing to take them as they lie. They make me feel all right anyway. Firmly grounded on rhythm and blues styles, these records endeared themselves to me right away, especially with their upfront and obvious preoccupations with women, sex, misery, drink, weird people or any combination thereof. I mean, this is just like real life to me, and don't let anyone kid you otherwise.

Apart from his choice of subjects, he's got the great lyric sense of the best of the blues masters, dropping in little lines and allusions throughout that are clearly the obvious but ignored truths of human actions. They're not quite well rounded enough to be your actual aphorisms or anything so contrived, but they're instantly recognizable and applicable to personal experience all the same. And he puts them across with such intensity, too: whether he's screwing or moping it's all there is in the world to me at that moment, there's nothing else at all. There's great variety here too, from flat out r&b to calm, slow, but somehow tormented ballads, but it's all welded together by Buckley's amazing voice, as well as the superb musicianship of the backing players.

I'll take these records because I never tire of them.

4. ROBERT JOHNSON — King of the Delta Blues Singers, Vol.2

I'd definitely need a moment's pause to decide whether to snatch up Volume 1 or 2 of Johnson's complete works. Both are quite brilliant: works of true art and distinction that we can see in hindsight as the absolute quintessence of solo singer/player blues. Other bluesmen may be arguably more "authentic", in the sense of more primitive or having been influences on Johnson, but he was the man who brought all the threads together. His is timeless music that could have been made yesterday, today or tomorrow and still pack the same heavy emotional impact. He really wrote the book on blues in terms of songwriting and playing, and almost everything that has followed him seems like either derivation or embellishment.

Anyway, Volume 2 is the one I grab, because it contains that pure gem "Love in Vain". You might have heard the Rolling Stones or someone else pull a version of this, but nothing can touch it in this incarnation; all other versions seem perversely extravagant in rather unpleasant and unnecessary ways. This is minimalist blues: if anything further was cut away there would be almost nothing left. As it is it's just a spare little guitar melody set against a slow walking bass line, and Johnson's lyric of departing love that mumbles in and around the guitar is just as flat and matter-of-fact as can be. That is, as long as you can accept as matter-of-fact the idea that the loss is bringing him right down to the killing floor. "It's hard to tell, it's hard to tell, when all your love's in vain," indeed. That line has come to me in a lot of varying situations, I can assure you. The vocal and guitar are so stripped down they almost cease to exist, hinting dismally at the awful endless dark empty road ahead indicated in the mood of the song, which itself peters out towards the end into wordless humming, to emerge right at the finale with a simple repeat of (of course) "All your love's in vain". Miserable, doomridden, last night of the world stuff, it has every bit of the emotional intensity that makes the blues so invigorating and cathartic. It's terrifically exciting stuff in some way, and how people can claim the blues bring them down is beyond me.

5. BRIAN ENO — Taking Tiger Mountain

There's not much I can say about this rather surreal musical narrative. I haven't yet grasped the storyline -- what there is of it; it's very sketchy -- and I don't claim to have got all the lyrics to all the songs, but the music is by turns odd, simple, dense, weird and startlingly beautiful. If for nothing

else I'd take it for the final sequence, "Taking Tiger Mountain", which with its repeated refrain of "We climbed/How we climbed" is, to use a word that has figured in almost all these notes, inspirational. It makes me feel better for having heard it -- not so mean and small and petty and earthbound. It's like a glimpse of a better world.

6. CLIFF BENNETT AND THE REBEL ROUSERS -- Got To Get You Into My Life

Of all these records this is the one that should have the most actual personal memories for me, as I sort of grew up with it from my middle teens, and in some form or another it has accompanied me through life ever since. However, I have to admit that except in the most general sense there are no memories like that for me. Of course I remember lots of rather futile parties, and miserable pubs, and street-wanderings, and so on and so forth, but that's hardly inspirational stuff. I prefer the idea of the memories I should have had but never came across; the ones that should have come after "I was alone/I took a ride/I didn't know what I would find". Maybe I missed the bus. But this remains as a reminder of the wild youth I never had. It's better than the Beatles' original on Revolver: the horns are harder, Bennett's singing is more desperate, the piano break is wittier, the rhythm section plays like it's their last chance (it virtually was), and the whole thing slams along right out of control. It's everything that a record like Ernie Maresca's "Shout Shout (Knock Yourself Out)" promised to be from the title but never quite was. A real forgotten classic that would probably sweep all before it if it was released again now. It's the only single on the list and I live it. That's a mistake but it's true, even if only in my own head. I love it too.

7. RANDY NEWMAN -- Gone Dead Train

No, this isn't some amazingly obscure Newman album. It is in fact a Jack Nitzsche composition written for the film Performance and simply sung by Newman over a wonderfully thunderous and clanging rock-blues backing. It's a terrific bit of rock music with immense forward drive, and the lyrics are so weird they never fail to amuse and fascinate me. I admit it is hardly unusual to use railroad trains (or rather, the driving thereof) as metaphor for sexuality, but it is rare to find impotence, premature ejaculation, and various other dysfunctions and oddities phrased quite as obliquely and funnily as they are here. I've never wholly figured out the lyric in years of listening, so that would give me something to do whilst alone in a strange unfriendly land. It -- and the rest of the Performance soundtrack which it is on -- would also give me good memories of what I think is one of the ten best films made in the last twenty years, and also memories of lots of good times because this number has featured on every party or convention tape I've ever made. Triple whammy.

8. ROXY MUSIC -- Manifesto

This one gets on the boat by simple virtue of being a record that gives me a real thrill of pleasure every time I hear it. There's nothing especially deep or meaningful about the lyrics; indeed, only by their blatant pop-awareness truism do they entirely escape being inconsequential. But they are good little songs that have some grounding in real experience, so that's okay. The band is

clever, clean, occasionally inspired; they do everything right. What more do you want? The whole thing really appeals to the potential middle-of-the-road, middle class, middling intellectual in me -- the desire to have something for nothing. It's good relaxing music that doesn't demand much to be enjoyed totally, and doesn't leave one feeling either halfwitted for having gone along with the gag or unsatisfied at the end. It's also terrific for fantasy-land. I have to admit I've always had this weird desire to grow up to be Bryan Ferry -- or rather Ferry as he ought to be, not the rather clumsy, somewhat inarticulate lump he is. Someone "clean, clever, occasionally inspired" I suppose. I've always found the illusion of arriviste demi-monde lifestyle he surrounds himself with worthy of some envy: I'm never far away from some fantasy of drinking and dodgy sex among the smartish set. I know it isn't really like that (for people like us, or him for that matter) but it's the thought that counts. Trouble is, little fat kids like me only grow up to sing the blues (if we can sing at all), and there's already been a Robert Johnson and a Muddy Waters.

Still, it's a great record. It even makes me laugh out loud sometimes.

9. B.B. KING -- Completely Well

I often fail to connect with B.B. King's far uptown blues style, but this one makes it entirely on the strength of "The Thrill Is Gone". Like "Somebody Up There Likes Me" it is a blend of old and new, this time the courageous emotionalism of small-group rhythm and blues overlaid with a stylish string arrangement. It's redolent of some of the very worst r&b/soul/pop fusion attempts, but this time sufficiently restrained and properly placed in the mix to add a sense of true greatness to what might otherwise be a rather nondescript, if competent song. It all adds up to a very unusual sound, one that anyone unfamiliar with it might be hard put to place in time. Indeed, when it was released as a single many years ago in the US the Rolling Stone writer reviewing it took off on a rather unusual fantasy based on the idea of radio waves bouncing back from space into times other than their own. That seemed like an unbearable conceit until I'd heard the record, but now I agree wholeheartedly.

The song itself -- a brief sketch of the emotions at play in a collapsing affair -- is nothing special and has no great specific relevance to my life, and truthfully, no lines from it really stick in my mind (always the test for a truly good song). But the arrangement, the whole orchestral sweep of it, is so perfect that like all the other records on this list it makes me feel better every time I hear it. It keeps my soul in tune.

10. ????????

The tenth choice is predictably the hardest. Nothing really presents itself as indispensable, but a number of good records vie for attention. I suppose it would all depend on my mood of the moment whether I would choose something solid and substantial like the Beatles' White Album or '67-'70, or some pleasantly enjoyable and witty pop stuff like Unequalled Equals. Or even Mink DeVille's Cabretta, a generally weak LP which is distinguished from many such others by a super version of Moon Martin's "Cadillac Walk", which next to "Somebody Up There Likes Me" may be one of my true favourite tracks ever, though for totally different reasons. Then again, some of Muddy Waters's earliest cuts

spring to mind, like "I Can't Be Satisfied" and "Feel Like Going Home" and "Still A Fool", which would really be in for a good chance except that I only have them as part of Volume 1 of the Chess Genesis series and I felt including a quad-album might be stretching my luck a little. Paradise and Lunch is my favourite Ry Cooder album, and is a genuinely brilliant piece of work, superbly played and with great songs. Bryan Ferry's The Bride Stripped Bare also has a good chance because of his versions of "Take Me To The River" and "Hold On I'm Coming", and for the knockout original (one of the great lost singles of the Seventies) "Sign of the Times". It's not easy to choose between them and many others not included. Indeed it might be simpler to give a list of those records in my collection that I'd just as soon leave behind. I guess the easy way out would be to take on my homemade compilation tapes that include the best of all these worlds.

Afterword

Naturally enough, I suppose, those records discussed don't necessarily represent what I play every day, so to round off the whole thing and give some more dimension to my attitudes, here's my list of what might be my top ten for today:

1. NEW YORK DOLLS -- Double reissue of New York Dolls and Too Much Too Soon.
2. DAVID BOWIE -- Scary Monsters
3. HOUND DOG TAYLOR AND THE HOUSEROCKERS -- Natural Boogie
4. NIGHTHAWKS -- Jacks and Kings, Full House
5. JIMI HENDRIX -- Rainbow Bridge, side 2
6. JIMI HENDRIX -- Cry of Love, side 1
7. BRIAN ENO -- Taking Tiger Mountain
8. BRIAN ENO -- Before and After Science
9. LOU REED -- The Bells, side 1
10. GEORGE THOROGOOD AND THE DESTROYERS -- More

--- Greg Pickersgill

Well bloody hell, I dunno. You ask someone for their eight favourite records, and before you know it they've managed to sneak in 25. Never could trust these science fiction fans.

Bloody hell, the BBC Pronouncing Funny Words Department's at it again. There was (inevitably) an item about Iran on this evening's news, and all of a sudden the newsreader starts pronouncing Ayatollah 'eye-toe-lah', with the stress on the final syllable. It's almost as bad as when the Russians invaded Afghanistan, and just when they were entering the capital all the news bulletins started to refer to Soviet tanks rolling into some city called Corble. Why bother, TAPPEN asks? Nobody cares that we call Espana 'Spain' and they call England 'Inglaterra'.

This is all irrelevant to anything except getting this page filled. We are not quite there, so I'll take this golden opportunity to inflict upon those of you who haven't already suffered it the second worst joke I ever thought up.

Q. "What does the Ayatollah like to eat for breakfast?"

A. "Khomeini grits."

Imaginary asterisks just above, because I'm changing the subject. I have an awful addiction that I have to confess to: I'm addicted to second-hand bookshops. Happiness, to me, is chancing on a dingy, forgotten shop in a back street somewhere, piled to the ceiling on all sides with dusty, cobwebbed books, clearly untouched for decades. I am incapable of walking past an open second-hand bookshop (though I can just about skirt my way around an expensive antiquarian place). Nor is it at all easy for me to leave a bookshop without buying something, even if it's something I immediately regret once I'm back in the daylight.

But it does have its compensations. Only the other day, for instance, I picked up a really triffic little book called Hindenburg's March Into London. This gem among predictive future war novels, published in English in 1916 (from a German original of a year or so earlier) shows the German Army's triumphal progress towards victory in the First World War. The Germans are all, of course, noble and upright, while the British are moral degenerates. (I am aware, of course, that our propaganda was no less biased. Indeed, the real highlight of the book is the translator's introduction, which naturally pours scorn on the book -- the object of the translation being to give everybody a good laugh -- and thanks Kaiser Wilhelm profusely for starting the war and alerting the British to the poisonous German serpent nestling in their collective bosom -- "Instead of the war tending to an invasion of our shore by German hordes, nothing has more thoroughly cleansed them from aliens whom we had been inclined to enthrone in our midst...").

In the same shop I also picked up an omnibus edition of H.G. Wells's scientific romances, published by Gollancz in 1933 and a super bargain in any era, containing 8 novels and running to over 1200 pages. The point of particular interest, however, is Wells's introduction, written specially for this edition, in which he gives his own view of this phase in his literary career, and of science fiction (though he doesn't call it that, of course) in general. I hadn't come across this before. It's worth reading what he says:

"These tales have been compared with the work of Jules Verne and there was a disposition on the part of literary journalists at one time to call be the English Jules Verne. As a matter of fact there is no literary resemblance whatever between the anticipatory inventions of the great Frenchman and these fantasies. His work dealt almost always with actual possibilities of invention and discovery, and he made some remarkable forecasts. The interest he invoked was a practical one; he wrote and believed and told that this or that thing could be done, which was not at that time done. He helped his reader to imagine it done and to realise what fun, excitement or mischief would ensue. Many of his inventions have "come true". But these stories of mine collected here do not pretend to deal with possible things; they are exercises of the imagination in a quite different field. They belong to a class of writing which includes the Golden Ass of Apuleius, the True Histories of Lucian, Peter Schlemihl and the story of Frankenstein... They are all fantasies; they do not aim to project a serious possibility; they aim indeed only at the same amount of conviction as one gets in a good gripping dream. They have to hold the reader to the end by art and illusion and not by proof and argument, and the moment he closes the cover and reflects he wakes up to their impossibility.

"In all this type of story the living interest lies in their non-fantastic elements and not in the invention itself. They are appeals for human sympathy

quite as much as any "sympathetic" novel, and the fantastic element, the strange property or the strange world, is used only to throw up and intensify our natural reactions of wonder, fear or perplexity. The invention is nothing in itself and when this kind of thing is attempted by clumsy writers who do not understand this elementary principle nothing could be conceived more silly and extravagant. Anyone can invent human beings inside out or worlds like dumb-bells or a gravitation that repels. The thing that makes such imaginations interesting is their translation into commonplace terms and a rigid exclusion of other marvels from the story. Then it becomes human. "How would you feel and what might not happen to you," is the typical question if for instance pigs could fly and one came rocketing over a hedge at you? How would you feel and what might not happen to you if suddenly you were changed into an ass and couldn't tell anyone about it? Or if you became invisible? But no one would think twice about the answer if hedges and houses also began to fly, or if people changed into lions, tigers, cats and dogs left and right, or if everyone could vanish anyhow. Nothing remains interesting where anything may happen.

"For the writer of fantastic stories to help the reader to play the game properly, he must help him in every possible unobtrusive way to domesticate the impossible hypothesis. He must trick him into an unwary concession to some plausible assumption and get on with his story while the illusion holds. And that is where there was a certain slight novelty in my stories when first they appeared. Hitherto, except in exploration fantasies, the fantastic element was brought in by magic. Frankenstein even, used some jiggery-pokery magic to animate his artificial monster. There was trouble about the thing's soul. But by the end of last century it had become difficult to squeeze even a monetary belief out of magic any longer. It occurred to me that instead of the usual interview with the devil or a magician, an ingenious use of scientific patter might with advantage be substituted. That was no great discovery. I simply brought the fetish stuff up to date, and made it as near actual theory as possible.

"As soon as the magic trick has been done the whole business of the fantasy writer is to keep everything else human and real. Touches of prosaic detail are imperative and a rigorous adherence to the hypothesis. Any extra fantasy outside the cardinal assumption immediately gives a touch of irresponsible silliness to the invention. So as soon as the hypothesis is launched the whole interest becomes the interest of looking at human feelings and human ways, from the new angle that has been acquired."

Says it all, really, doesn't he?

(It occurs to me that I'm in breach of copyright in quoting such a long chunk without permission. Please don't give me away....)

At some point I may try to condense the above into the world's second best definition of science fiction. The world's best definition of science fiction is Leroy Kettle's version of a Peter Nicholls definition, and first appeared in True Rat 7:

"Sci-fi can be succinctly defined as speculation, whether based on established facts or on logical pseudo-facts consistent with the framework of the fiction in question, involving smelly green pimply aliens furiously raping or eating, or both, beautiful naked huge-breasted chicks, covering them in slime, red, oozing, living slime, dribbling from every horrific orifice, squeezing out

between bulbous pulpy lips onto the sensuous velvety skin of the writhing sweating slave-girls, their bodies cut and bruised by knotted whips brandished by giant blond vast-biceped androids called Simon, and written in the Gothic mode."

Enough said.

* * * * *

There seems to be something missing from this fanzine, but aside from such obvious omissions as literary ability and wit (in the editor's bits, I hasten to add) I'm hard put to say what it is. Maybe it's fanzine reviews: I've always been interested in fanzine reviewing, and feel there's always a place (not to say a need) for it. Unfortunately there aren't any fanzines of recent vintage to hand which inspire any penetrating (or even blunt) insights. (Which is not to say I didn't enjoy some of them, or that I didn't respond negatively to others.) This state of affairs is related to my reasons for starting on this project at this time, of course, but that's of small comfort to a man with stencils to fill and an empty brain.

So it's probably time to get on to the letter column. I have received a few letters during the last seven years, and it occurs to me that one or two of them deserve a wider audience. I haven't yet managed to think of a witty and appropriate title for a letter column, so for the time being it will be known as

THE LETTER COLUMN

The first two letters came to me in my capacity (alluded to previously) as assistant editor at Gollancz. They come from a prospective sf author who, out of kindness, will be referred to as Ronnie Lowe.

19 July 1977

Dear Sir,

Kindly consider the enclosed Admiral Slade and other stories, for publication.

You say that you publish SF. I am offering you SF. Those Slade stories are connected and better than many a novel as we both know. Then you have horror stories; and at the rear general stories. Better value than a weak novel. I have a novel; Heineman Ltd, rejected it. It is too expensive to send out. I can write novels. But I am packing the game up. This is one of my last tries for the time being.

Yours faithfully,
Ronnie Lowe

Gollancz's postcard acknowledgement may have made reference to his failure to enclose return postage. Whatever the reason, a week later a follow-up letter arrived:

Dear Sir,

Enclosed is a postal order for my ms.

I said I could write novels. Well, I can write short novels. I am writing one at the moment, Subliner. About a submarine that carries passengers. When I am writing a short novel I think how it would appear as a film and write accordingly.

My second book of stories is even better than the first. It has got Rome; and the Spy from Atlantis and other stories. I sent you one Baron Lugo story. It is not much. But I have turned him into a horror story character and written about six good stories about him. I don't know where I get the ideas from myself.

Ronnie Lowe

After leaving Gollancz I went to work at the Science Fiction Foundation, an organization dedicated to the proposition that SF, as a whole, is a lot more significant than those of us who have read a lot of it know it to be. As time went on and the effort of forcing myself to appear to believe this became ever greater, my brain started to hurt and I left. But that's another story. What is significant for present purposes is that the Science Fiction Foundation, for reasons best known to its founders, is custodian of the papers of the now-defunct International Flat Earth Society, a fact which neatly serves to reinforce exactly the kind of public belief about sf that the SFF was supposed to counter. But that's another story. What is significant for present purposes is that the flat earth stuff attracted a certain amount of correspondence, none of which I ever answered. The best communication follows. It was addressed to Flat Earth Society, c/o Peter Nicholls, Banner of Science Fiction -- now there's a job I really would like to have!

8th April 1980

Dear Sirs,

I tried to get in touch with you when I was in London last, but did not have sufficient time. I am a pilot, and because of something I have documented when flying, I think there is more to your theory than mere scientific/mathematical theory alone (I don't think it's absolutely flat, but rather in a state of flux). Please tell me how to contact you -- I'll be back in July.

R. Fuller

So what, you say, just one more loony. The difference, though, is that this one is a pilot with Air Canada! You have been warned. I know that there's a lot of cut-throat competition in civil aviation these days, but for an airline to plot routes which take its planes out over the edge of the world is, I think, a bit much.

Here ends the letter column for this issue. WAHF: Jacqueline Lichtenberg (we did, we really did, honest we did).

Well, so far we've managed to be almost nice to almost everyone. This must cease. Yes, it's time for the gossip column, which is the work of British fandom's favourite quipster and Cyrano de Bergerac look-alike...

THE VOICE OF THE BOLSTER (the column that helps you to sleep)

by Leroy Kettle

Aging Abraham Lincoln Simulacrum and adder, Kevin "We can bill you" Smith, the man whose attempts to win any rotten old minor fanzine award are put to shame by the ease with which his deaf chum and mastermind Dave Langford gathers in prize after prize with all the grace and humility of Harlan Ellison on stilts, has combined with the fan who sounds like a fish (and looks like he sounds), Alan Dorey, to hire ex-Wolverhampton crusher and one-time Leroy Kettle acolyte Ken (Mangles) Eadie to be bouncer at BSFA business meetings. Under the pretence of hiring Ken to eject up-and-coming George Hay impersonator and Prince Charles lookalike Gerry Webb from meetings until his spring breaks, Smith's real and sinister motive is to make him the first of a gang of junior Dorsai, who will delicately threaten anyone not supporting him for TAFF with a variety of things ranging from enforced attendance at BSFA business meetings whether or not Gerry Webb is present, to a guided tour of Bingley handcuffed to D. West.

* * *

Alan Dorey is supporting Smith in this loathsome deed, not because of his simple-mindedness, but because otherwise Smith will reveal to the world that Dorey's own vote-gathering stratagem for TAFF -- marrying an American fan on Independence Day -- is in fact a fraud. Because Dorey and his betrothed, Rochelle Reynolds, cannot wed! Well, they can, of course, but it will be illegal in the eye of Man and newt because Dorey's brain-cell count is lower than that required in American law. This is why Ian Maule had to marry a Briton, and why Ian Williams would only be allowed to wed a tadpole, even in Britain.

* * *

And what of the appalling TAFFish U-turn by the well-known fannish xenophobe and iconoclastic establishment figure, Gregory (Fan on the rampage) Pickersgill, whose own secret plans to walk away with TAFF have involved years of abuse and criticism of all living Americans except for his current vote-catching wife, Baldy-Coad, Terry Carr and Pearl Johnson (shurely some mistake? Ed.). The lovely Linda Pickersgill -- descended from both the Pope and Robert Mitchum, in ascending order -- and Greg are together planning to produce Greg's latest version of FOULER called WANNA GO TO THE STATES NOW BOSS, PLEASE. Greg's main platform is the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons into the US version of a harmless convention game, henceforth to be known as American Bullfrog -- a game which Greg reckons he will easily win for Britain, as all Americans (bar those known to me personally) are too fat and slow.

* * *

And what of Malcolm Edwards, the short-sighted typist from North London, whose recent win in GRUFF (Getting Rid of Unpleasant Fans Fund) led to the deportation to Australia of Jo Jo Nicholas, one-time alcoholic and successful unknown, and the boy voted the world's most turgid writer (PONG, ANSIBLE and VOGUE) and the world's most turgid dresser (PONG, ANSIBLE and GAY NEWS) and the world's least incisive critic (sit down all of you — when I want support for my statements I'll ask for it). I think the Aussies got a rotten deal, being sent a chiffon-clad, bouffanted, skinny little poof, when they've spent years trying to send the same sort of people to us: Brosnan, Flynn, Nicholls. Why couldn't we have sent them a real man? Robert P. Holdstock to name but four.

* * *

Talking of Robert, his big buddy — the Christopher Evans who is marginally more alive than the other one — is struggling desperately to make his name as a hack writer following in the faux-path of Robert P. Despite a pathetic attempt to produce so-called "quality" work (such as the heavily-edited version of his "original" novel Capella's Golden Tits), Evans is now writing in the style which will eventually make his name, although it once belonged to a writer whose boots he would not be fit to lick even if they weren't six feet under. Turdoids from Below is the subtle tale of a female literary agent living in a sewer who gets transmogrified into a huge heap of malignant fecal matter and tries to conquer the universe. When anyone sends her a story she says, "I'm not handling any more crap." The novel is understood to be autobiographical, insofar as Evans's prose makes it possible to understand at all.

* * *

And what of ex-rotudoid Andrew (Remainder) Stephenson, who recently rented a hoverbus to take thirty-five naked screaming pre-pubescent Trekkies across the Channel to participate in the Paris Orgithon. Far be it from me to reveal how many depravities Mr Stephenson participated in, but reliable sources confirm that a number larger than zero might be inappropriate. Mr Stephenson is currently working on his latest printout ... and the reliable source would do well to send at least £5 to this magazine to ensure that his name is forgotten, at least temporarily.

* * *

And is John Brosnan really being sued by a producer of James Bond films whose name is not dissimilar to a variety of cabbage? If not, why not?

— Leroy Kettle

* * * * *

Mr Kettle is, as must be clear from the above, a charitable man, which must be why he fails to mention the recent arrest of the Beast of Bingley, D. West. The boys in blue began to take an interest in the sinister West when they learned of his lifelong habit of secreting himself behind gravestones in Bingley cemetery and whispering to passersby from his hiding place. West is believed to be several thousand years old.

This is TAPPEN 1, and it is brought
to you by Malcolm Edwards
28 Duckett Road
London N4 1BN
U.K.

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* * * * *

The next issue of TAPPEN will appear as soon as circumstances -- i.e. the state of my bank balance and the receipt of enough contributions -- permit. In practice this means no sooner than August but no later than October.

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Thanks this issue to John Harvey, for electrostencilling, and Rob Hansen, for the use of his duplicator. Also the contributors, especially Chris Evans whose prompt response to a vague request forced me actually to do something instead of talking about it.

Last stencil typed 23rd June (10:25 pm). Since I started England have lost a Test match and Wimbledon has begun. My foot still hurts.

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