

C H U N D E R!

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ETREKETTE

(John Foyster reports)

TREKCON 1, Australia's first STAR TREK convention (or so I believe), was held on July 15, 1978 at the Uniting Church Hall, Camberwell, in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Your enterprising editor and reporter was there in the guise of a guest speaker of sorts, and the date was chosen because it was the closest weekend to July 13, the tenth anniversary of STAR TREK in Australia.

Adrienne Losin was the convention organiser (another great triumph for Monash University), and this convention was actually organised - the details of this I shall go into later, but it makes a pleasant contrast with some recent conventions I have attended.

TREKCON 1 ran noon to midnight, but I can only report on the first eight hours: this is due to my raging desire to work on the following Sunday morning, not any disinterest in the con programme. I tried at several times to count the number of people present, but it seemed to grow with age, as more and more fans overcame the slight indirection in the pre-circulated map and found their way into a convention area which managed somehow to be the coldest place in Melbourne on that day, but otherwise was certainly adequate: the last time I counted I reckoned between 80 and 90, but the D&D players would not have been counted in that, and I'm not sure how many others were engaged in nefarious matters in the back rooms.

Anyway, the 80 - 90 programme attendees were (or at least 80 % of them were) aged 15-20, I would guess, with 10% older and 10% younger. As various people had told me to expect, about 60% were female, some of whom at least appeared to be wearing partially-inflated basketballs as part of their costumes.

The consite, unlike (again!) those I've visited recently, had been tricked up to make clear that this was a special interest convention, and not to be mistaken for, for example, a conference of recently-retired dentists: posters, drawings, clippings, models (and the occasional huckster) testified to the common interest of the attendees. By contrast a visitor walking into the UNICON IV main room, for example, would have had no idea at all of what was going on there, other than that some sort of meeting was planned or was being held. Not all the display was Trekkie-oriented, with STAR WARS receiving (critical) attention in particular. Even SPACE AGE BOOKS managed to send out some material for sale, and prepared a special STAR TREK catalogue for the occasion. No one from SPACE AGE was at the convention, however.

TREKCON 1 made the traditional late start - about 15 minutes, with a few opening words from Adrienne. Then David Atkinson, chairing a panel, introduced Guest of Honour Diane Marchant. Diane spoke for about ten minutes on the history of STAR TREK fandom in Australia, her visit to the US, and the way in which ST can be seen as an extension of Gene Roddenberry. She also mentioned that fans from NSW SA and Tasmania were present: these latter I later observed with my own boggling eyes. I am able to be reasonably precise on the duration of these talks, because the organiser/chairman had set a rather loud timer going at the beginning of each speech. This was very effective.

Next up was Jan McDonnell who focussed upon Kirk in dealing with such questions as are the characters in STAR TREK heroes, are they worth

emulating? Perry Iles then talked about computers (both in STAR TREK and in the real world). None of these three speeches led to argument in the later question session. David Atkinson's speech about good and evil, and the role of 'aliens', in STAR TREK did lead to more than a few questions - with many of those present suggesting that these matters were not dealt with in STAR TREK in quite so simple a manner as he had described. Joan McLachlan's speech about the relationships between the STAR TREK characters (specifically Kirk and Spock) also led to some heated exchanges, though these related to questions of emphasis (whether, for example, one should deal exclusively with Kirk/Spock).

After the argumentative questions, the Trivia Quiz commenced: a complex system was used, which involved questions to and from the panel, panel members exchanging places with members of the audience, and a general revelation that some people know a lot more about STAR TREK than others.

At about 1.45 pm this frivolity ceased, and the first coffee break was called. In true Melbourne fashion a Feeding of the Five Thousand was run, and this worked well (for a change) except that the Five Thousand proved unexpectedly peckish. This coffee break (of about twenty minutes) was another opportunity for the pre-planning to be demonstrated: a VCR and monitor had been set up, and this was in action whenever the formal program was on vacation - an electronic music gizmo was also available for attendees to fool around with.

When the program resumed, Chris Long spoke on 'Alternative Communication' - and he gave a demonstration. The subject of both speech and demonstration was the possibility of modulating light waves rather than radio waves: although the idea had been demonstrated about a century ago, only some aspects of our present technology make this a feasible system - with applications for Out There. When I talked to Chris later I suggested that he had done marvels in keeping the audience as genuinely interested in the subject as it was: he admitted that he had prepared for an older audience and had had to throw away most of what he wanted to say. It was very true, however, that he kept the audience on the edge of the seats, I suspect he would also get a pretty good hearing at a Melbourne SF convention.

After the next break the auction commenced, and here I found the prices surprising in some instances (a good deal of stf was included, as well as the Other Stuff): sexist Melbourne fandom might have been surprised to find the auction (like almost all of the convention) run by females. The first item, for example, went for \$4, and was the most un-Finlay-like Finlay print - of Spock.

I was the next speaker, and induced a somnolent state in some of the audience in only forty minutes by talking about 'Science fiction and science reality' (a title wished on me by Adrienne, and this revelation is how I get my own back): the audience's 'stunned mullet' impression was not nearly as good as that achieved at UNICON 1 when I spoke for a similar length of time, but they'll learn. I doubt that any group of Trekkies has ever heard so much about George Allan England before, and that possibly extends to stf fans in Australia. Amongst those who remained awake was Chris Long, and we started talking about politics in science fiction: I spare the reader the details.

The auction then resumed: I stayed around until the bid on the item I wanted exceeded that currently asked by SPACE AGE BOOKS and then left to have a Chinese meal with Helena Roberts - the dinner break was going to be coming up soon. This means that I am not able to give a very complete report on the filler items which I have already mentioned. Two I do particularly remember were a tape of THE MAKING OF STAR WARS, and a replay of a radio interview with Gene Roddenberry conducted by Melbourne station 3AW on the morning of the convention.

I can report that Louey's Restaurant was up to its usual standard.

(For more, gruesome details, turn to page 6)

FANZINE REVIEWS

Reviewed in this issue: Mailing 62 of the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association (OBE Gary Mason, PO Box 258, Unley, SA 5061), NOUMENON 22/23 (ed and pub by Brian Thurogood, Australian agent Carey Handfield, PO Box 91, Carlton, Victoria 3053), ANARKALI 1 (Margaret Arnott, PO Box 51, Thebarton, SA 5031, for the usual), MAYA 14 (Rob Jackson, Australian agent Robin Johnson, GPO Box 4039, Melbourne, Vic 3001), SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW 25 (Dick Geis, Australian agent SPACE AGE BOOKS, 305-307 Swanston St, Melbourne, Vic 3000), GEGENSCHWEIN 34 (Eric Lindsay, c/o 6 Hillcrest Ave, Faulconbridge, NSW 2775).

If fanzines are about science fiction, and some still are, then there is sufficient information about other subjects in this lot to make one wonder about the connections. But there are some straight-down-the-middle scientificational contents, and I guess the interviews in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, with George Scithers, Poul Anderson, and Ursula Le Guin would be middlest of them all: certainly there is in these interviews the very formality ('Thank you, Mr Scithers.' 'Thank you very much, Mr Anderson.' 'For four years I had been involved with Mrs Le Guin's work both as reader and teacher.') so absent from fandom as she is, but so awesomely present in the furthest reaches of lame-brained American literit, which like a vast and stinking oil-slick is now beginning to drive swimmers from the beach. Admittedly these interviews are better than some in the recent past ("Jeez, what are you working on now, Mr Zobbledyke?"), and the interviewers actually show mementary flashes of familiarity with the interviewee's work: the interview with Scithers, by Darrell Schweitzer, is however a rather odious exhibition of sycophancy which comes about as close as possible to giving the lie to Dick's proclamation that 'NO ADVERTISING WILL BE ACCEPTED'. SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW is, of course, much more than a few interviews (96 pages in this issue), and there are thoughtful book reviews, letters from all over, even a symposium on CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. This leads in nicely to a fairly important piece by Ray Palmer on Flying Saucers and all that stuff. This issue of SFR goes further than usual in its devotion to science fiction and publishes a chunk of Geis's novel ONE IMMORTAL MAN. I don't think I'm going to like Geis's style, if this episode is typical, but there are a few surprises (stylistically), and Dick manages the 'with one bound he was free' scene better than I think I've seen it done before. (Nevertheless I think it would have been better if he had done parts of this scene from viewpoints other than the protagonist's - a minor point, perhaps, but terror and amazement are perhaps better registered by the sufferers than by the imposer.) MAYA 14 has a short piece, THE BRITISH CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE FICTION which, written by Brian Aldiss, appears far more likely to be an introduction to an anthology than a definitive consideration of the role of (to broaden the canvas a little) writers from the UK. NOUMENON 22/23, much more news-oriented, celebrates science fiction in newsy-snippets, book reviews, and stuff about pop music and art (Rollo Treadway very reasonably dumps on Galaxy's artwork in this issue, but only briefly). Brian also serves the people by listing recently-released sf (and sometimes that adjective is appropriate in more than one way), something which a braver soul than I (hint) might attempt in Australia.

The current NOUMENON also is oversize (since it is a double issue, 40 pages probably isn't too many, even if the 38th is numbered '26'), largely (ahem) because of a supplement on Futures/Alternatives. This is a pile of stuff which recalls that first urge to fanzine publishing - the boy scientist's need to save the world. As presented here by a number of writers who present alternatives/future technologies at various levels of sophistication: in some ways alternative technology now sparks off the kinds of reactions fans had to sf in the thirties and forties, and it is probably no coincidence that both NOUMENON and local agent Carey Handfield sell CO-EVOLUTION QUARTERLY. The difficulty, it seems to me, is that there is a necessity (or is there?) to simplify issues. This seems also

to apply to an article by Mike Clark in his ANZAPAZINE ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS: obviously a twelve-page article on 'Psychology and Consciousness' isn't going to describe everything there is to describe, but sometimes the simplifications grate. There are two problems in Mike's discussion of Piaget, for example. The first relates to the way Piaget's research is described - Piaget's approach is rather casual, and his descriptions of what he has done is, when one gets close to it, rather vague. This isn't all Piagetian shortcoming - frequently the translators are traitors - but there are serious objections to Piaget's 'findings'. Secondly, the nature of Piaget's research is quite different from that of say, Roger Sperry, which is also discussed in this article, as several writers (notably Patrick Suppes) have noted. Yet the casual reader might infer that Piaget and Sperry operated within the same philosophy of research, whereas they are about as far apart as Kuhn and Popper. (In dealing with Sperry's research, there's an unfortunate tendency to replace 'most' with 'all', unless this 'the left (in right-handed people) being predominantly concerned with verbal and logical functions' is intended to drive 'predominantly' into the ground by requiring it to imply that the statement is true for most right-handers.

In GEGENSCHWEIN 34 Ken Ozanne is guilty of a more ghastly simplification: complaining about Eric's habit of issuing GEG out of sequence, he points out that 'there is a theorem that states that every set of real numbers is well-ordered by the relation 'less than or equal to''. This is, of course, true except that one might as well note that there is only one set of real numbers. He also says that the theorem 'may be extended to more general sets' - which interests neither Eric nor the general reader, since Ken really meant that the well-ordering theorem applies to more restricted sets (for example, integers, which most of us use to number our fanzines, or rationals, which, at his most reckless, Eric sometimes uses). And that is also true, of course. But Ken is trying to argue that Eric should issue his fanzines so that, if one is published later than another, the number assigned to the later issue is greater than the number assigned to the earlier issue. Alas, we are no longer dealing with a nice easy set of numbers like the reals, but rather with a set of ordered pairs (date, number) to which the well-ordering theorem does not apply: this time the simplification has become a pain in the arse.

Mike Clark managed also to come up with another kind of simplification in a pretty amusing introduction to the long article already discussed. He quotes at delightful length from a book titled MIX ME A METAPHOR a series of what he, and obviously the author joins him in this, believes to be mixed metaphors. This, for example, is a mixed metaphor:

'The right honourable gentleman has gone to the top of the tree and caught a very big fish.' (quoted on page 2 of A&A)

but this is not:

'The store, where a window was found to be smashed, is only a stone's throw from the county police headquarters.' (page 1 of A&A)

The second quote, like so many others given by Mike, is an unfortunate choice of words - even tasteless - but it is not a mixed metaphor. The following is a useful model of a mixed metaphor:

'The right honourable gentleman is leading the people over the precipice with his head in the sand.' (Fowler's MODERN ENGLISH USAGE)

The reason for all this is, I suppose, that fanzine publishers don't want to talk about science fiction all the time, being rather better-rounded than that (and in the case of John Bangsund, being better-rounded than most), but while science fiction and its connotations serve as a lingua franca for us, we don't necessarily overlap sufficiently in these other interests: if we want to communicate about semiology, say, we have to simplify almost to, if not beyond, the point of distortion. But, as I suggested a page ago, do we really need to do this? Def re considering the question again,

let me return briefly to SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. Dick Geis has for a long time included, in amongst all the stfnal stuff, a Geis's-eye-view of the world at large. In the current issue this material is in one ten-page chunk - and at the end of the column Dick expresses his dissatisfaction with the result: in future that kind of writing will be published in another Geis fanzine, RICHARD E GEIS (another revived title). Now in that column Dick often uncovers interesting aspects of events in the USA which don't receive much publicity elsewhere, and since it is only a part of a much larger fanzine, those readers who are not interested can skip it completely. But this alternative to stuff about science fiction can also run into the same problems as the very different fanzine contents which have been noted back on page 4. That is, the need for contraction almost always leads to distortion. For example Dick's discussion of the Yankee/Cowboy theory of political and economic power in the United States in the 1960s is so abbreviated as to be almost potty rather than potted.

Well, what is there for the fanzine editor who realises that fanzines maybe ought to contain something other than science fiction and discussions thereof, but who doesn't want to boil down substantial matters to fit a hole on page 25? One good example is to be found in MAYA 14, in which Bob Shaw, in THE BERMONDSEY TRIANGLE MYSTERY, takes the mickey out of one of the many pseudo-scientific fads of our time; one particular advantage of this approach is that it offers many opportunities for cartoonists. One might also occasionally give vent to feelings of outrage on matters tangential (in a sense) to science fiction, as in Dick Geis's shriek against uppity authors on pages 22-23 of this SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW.

A more daring step is to stand back from science fiction and fandom altogether, and talk about one's own life, often in diary form. Since Dick Geis's life seems to have an awful lot of science fiction in it, his writings in this vein don't raise the greatest problems with this kind of writing - which are that the writer must be able to write interestingly and must have some interesting material to work with. John Bangsund does this in PARERGON PAPERS, but that is absent from the current ANZAPA mailing. Irwin Hirsh, in KHALESPEARE 2 (18 pages of ANZAPAZINE with not a mailing comment in the lot), seems to be developing this style, and the reaction from readers suggests that he is succeeding.

But this encroaches upon another device for filling fanzine pages, and the already excessive length of this review means that I must stop here and take up the other devices - letters of comment, artwork, and talking about science fiction fandom itself - in a continuation of this piece in the next CHUNDER! A newszine should, after all, contain some news.

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NEWS

Scoop Edmonds, in a final issue (and then a last gasp issue) of FANW SLETTER, which came out only a week ago, managed to include most of the news I would want to run here. In chronological order of events, his news was that Robert Sheckley will not be at UNICON V or at the following workshop due to illness, that at the Melbourne Eastercon Bert Chandler will be pro GoH and Brian Thurogood will be fan GoH (while the film festival announced by MUSFA for that period has been cancelled), and that Gordon R. Dickson will be Guest of Honour at SYNCON '79. In reprrting the nonGoHing of R A Heinlein at SYNCON '79, Leigh remarks that 'he may in fact never have intended attending that convention': suspicious folk (no names) are now wondering whether Heinlein was ever asked to be GoH. //IGUANACON also seemed to have stuffed up HUGO ballots for Australian members, and members are supposed to write to Mervyn Binns to get copies of the ballot. // Included with FS were GUFF and FAAA ballots, and P*U*B*L*I*C*I*T*Y for the Melbourne E-stercon. Details from Derrick Ashby, PO Box 175, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205, if you missed out on the flyer. More stuff on the next page.

(continued from page 2)

The programme for the evening was a masquerade followed by slides and films (note that to date there hasn't been any mention of STAR TREK episodes being screened - and to my knowledge none were, though a blooper reel was due to be shown). Since many of the attendees had been in costume all day, I was not sure that there would be much that was new. I was wrong in this, however.

About one third of the attendees had costumes which, though not of Worldcon standard, certainly were as good as those I've seen at some local Australian conventions. There was (I don't think I can put this delicately) a certain sameness about the costumes, and those which attracted the judges' eyes (Ian McKay, Chris Long, Diane Marchant and blush) were those which stepped away from the mould. A bunch of Klingons won the group prize, and amongst the other prizewinners Stephen Bates was particularly memorable as Schmuck, a black-sheep of Spock's family, and leader of Vulcan's first punk rock group.

I left pretty soon after that, with memories of a friendly convention - in a group of that size it isn't difficult to notice if there is anyone with no one to talk to - and one which I suspect the organisers will have been sufficiently pleased with to try again in the near future.

JOHN FOYSTER

(Next issue, I hope, a report on SWANCON 3)

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AND THE WINNER IS.....

Identification of the 'pseudo-intellectual in the peanut gallery' has proved unexpectedly difficult. The best candidate would seem to be Ms Eleanor Lynch (who is not presently connected with the University of Sydney), and the winner is so doubtful of the accuracy of this identification that the requested anonymity will be preserved.

CLUBS AND STUFF

At the Nova Mob meeting of July 4 (George Turner and Robin Johnson spoke at some length on James Blish) it really and truly was resolved that future meetings would be taped. The Nova Mob is looking for a ~~stack~~ sercon fan interested in transcribing and publishing these tapes. // There's a similar group in Sydney, which meets once a month to discuss science fiction: I'm not supposed to know about it at all, and I'm certainly not going to tell you all I know. // The 56 pages of APPLESAUCE 2 (June) are now being distributed (Keith Curtis, Box J175 Brickfield Hill, NSW) // Melbourne fans, meanwhile, are elated to discover that by remote control they have been nominated to a new club - the Melbourne Charletans, Parasites and Meatballs Society, a local branch of the Australian Science Fiction Association, it would seem - which has been announced by Graham Stone, Fuehrer of the aforementioned ASFA, in the June '78 issue of his fanzine, SCIENCE FICTION NEWS. On all sides Melbourne fans are heard to be muttering 'am I a meatball? am I a parasite? what exactly is a charletan?' Mr Stone is apparently disturbed about the appearance of a fanzine titled AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS which seems to imitate too closely the title of his own: I wonder how J Michael Rosenblum felt about THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN? Meanwhile the MCPMS is raising funds to buy a dictionary for GBS - that way he might find out how to spell 'charlatan'. (I feel a little guilty about my own fanzine title - after all, Graham was publishing Sydney chunder before I was born.) // BOOK ADDICT and BOOK SCENE are two little journals with substantial sections devoted to SF. Pick them up if you see them - I shall discuss one issue of each in the next CHUNDER! // Tolkienfest in Sydney last weekend but one // Writers' Workshop in Adelaide 6-9/10 (Jeff Harris, 95 Second Ave, Joslin, SA 5070 for details) // More Tolkien stuff - seminars in Sydney, Melbourne soon: details in the next. // CoA JB, 7 Derby St, Kew, Vic (Bangsund, i.e.)