

HARRY BELL HANSEN '02...

...DUKE, DUKE, DUKE, DUKE OF EARL, DUKE, DUKE.....TIME FOR THE.....

INTRO

INTRO...put another nickel in the record machine.

INTRO

I suppose it's inevitable, in a country as wet as Britain tends to be, that summers can get pretty humid thus making keeping dry next to impossible and resulting in you getting home from work at the end of the day in clothes that have to be literally peeled off, particularly when you've been standing nose-to-armpit for the past hour on an Underground train whose air-conditioning had inexplicably remained switched off. In the glossy world of the ads it would now be time to step out onto an elegant balcony, a cool breeze caressing your skin as you sip iced Campari, but here in the real world we ordinary mortals unbutton our shirts, kick off our shoes, throw open the window, and take a can of bitter from the fridge while contemplating how to open our nextish.

Humid it may be, but summer it is and summer is that time of year when residents of London find themselves being visited by friends and relatives from the provinces. So it was, early in July, that I found myself giving my parents and my kid sister the scenic tour of central London's more notable landmarks. With the knowledge that comes from actually living in the capitol I had previously worked out a route against such an eventuality and, somewhat to my surprise, found that if you know what you are doing you can, within the space of an afternoon's walking, see Covent Garden, the South Bank Arts Complex, the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Horse Guards Parade, St. James's Park, Buckingham Palace, Picadilly Circus, Leicester Square, and Trafalgar Square. What I found more surprising was that while I'd become fairly blasé about all this since moving up here some two years back, actually taking visitors around the sights and seeing their pleasure made me appreciate them rather more myself. I guess it's true what they say about familiarity breeding contempt, particularly when I can see Big Ben, the Post Office Tower, and St. Paul's Cathedral anytime I want by just glancing out the office window...

Having mentioned my office brings to mind that I opened the last issue with a comment on the drawing of a doughnut-jammer I was working on, and the other day I came across another unlikely piece of equipment. I was riffling through the files when I turned up the operating instructions for a Bread Buttering Machine. At first I couldn't believe it, but there it was in living monochrome - not a crackpot Heath Robinsonesque one-off but a device produced in the hundreds, if not thousands, by a respected manufacturer of bakery equipment for chrissakes! I tell you, there are things going on you have no inkling of, things which, if you only knew, would have you falling about with laughter.

The cover for this issue, as you will have already observed, is another Hansen/Bell collaboration, this time with Harry pencilling and me inking. It took a lot of threatening, prodding, and cajoling before Harry came up with the goods but, finally, his pencilled cover turned up on my doormat one morning in a plain brown envelope. I opened the envelope....and my heart sank!

What had happened, you see, is that I'd asked Harry Bell, a good friend and someone I've known for years, for a cover but on seeing it for the first time I realised that it had been drawn by HARRY BELL, someone I regarded as Britain's top fanartist when I first encountered his work seven years ago and someone I still regard as Britain's top fanartist, no one having come along since to alter that opinion. I was intimidated, and this was not helped by the fact that Harry had furnished me with pencils so complete that I found it difficult to bring myself to touch them at all. Eventually I did, of course, and discovered that there is rather more to inking than you might think. This was the first time I'd ever inked anyone else's pencils and I'd always imagined that it was a fairly simple process involving no more than merely going over the pencil lines but not so, not so at all. It took me a total of three hours to ink the cover, a fair bit of it spent staring at a particular element and trying to figure out just what Harry had intended and trying not to fuck-up the composition by making the wrong decision. Difficult but interesting. Since similar collaborations are forthcoming between myself and Dan Steffan I'll have to keep notes of my thoughts on what I'm doing as I go along and work them into an article for a future issue, though how interesting this would be to the non-artists in my readership remains to be seen.

This issue features the first appearance of TRUFAN & JUNIOR, a two-page strip at the back of the zine. There are a number of reasons for doing the strip, the main one being that I felt like it. I'll run it for the next few issues to see how I feel about it, and how you feel about it of course, and take it from there. One or two of you, after reading it, may wonder how it differs from STARFAN, so I'll tell you. The main difference is that where STARFAN goes off into flights of fancy (time-travel, space-travel, barbarians, and a character described as "an alien neofan") TRUFAN & JUNIOR will be more 'down-to-earth', sort of a cross between DALLAS and a con. At the moment I'm thinking of making STARFAN 2 the next fanzine I put out. Now I know the publication of this zine has come to seem as unlikely a fannish event as Joseph Nicholas buying a round of drinks or the second coming of Terry Hughes (who many of you will be too young to remember) but some of the pages were drawn three years ago and I really should finish it off soon.

This fanzine is available for 'the usual' though I think I ought to clarify what I mean by this, which is letter of comment, fanzine in trade, or editorial whim. I am not interested in unsolicited articles, fiction, or artwork. I've had several offers of artwork lately, for which I'm grateful but puzzled as EPSILON plainly doesn't run interior artwork (other than T&J as of this issue). This isn't because I can't get any (I'm quite capable of producing it myself, after all) but is a matter of choice. I've always hated the use of random fillos to break up pages of type, and always ignore requests to do any, since it seems unimaginative and reduces the art to little more than interior decoration. The use of artwork drawn to illustrate a specific article is another thing entirely, something I'm altogether more in favour of.

I recently re-read STOP BREAKING DOWN 7, and found it a better fanzine than I first thought (see p.5). Like most people I judged it not on its own merits but remembered the first run and expected more of the same. We all change and move on, Greg included, as I (perhaps more than most) should have realised. So it goes.

NOTIONS

NOTIONS.....some homespun conventional wisdom.

NOTIONS

The bidding session is not usually considered one of the more exciting events on the Eastercon programme, but at CHANNELCON all that changed. For the first time in many years there were two strong bids, ALBACON 2 for Glasgow and METROCON for London, and a lot of tension was generated with the parity in the levels of support they enjoyed becoming apparent as the votes were painstakingly counted. Prior to the session many of us had expected METROCON to win the bid easily and regarded the bidding session as a mere formality, so the final tally (which according to ANSIBLE was ALBACON 222 votes and METROCON 199) came as something of a shock. The idea I'd been toying with of making this the first convention where I'd sleep in my own bed back here at the offices of the Greenleaf Road Publishing Empire had suddenly disappeared and so, almost certainly, had the possibility of holding a major convention in London in the foreseeable future since the deal the METROCON committee had pulled together was not one anyone else is likely to come close to again. In some parallel universe a number of those complacent fans who in ours thought the result a foregone conclusion no doubt made the effort to get to the bidding session, and in their universe the 1983 Eastercon will be held in London but not, alas, in ours.

Like most fans I tend to vote primarily on geography, a factor which when applied to Britain would no doubt receive snorts of derision from North American fans who often have to travel distances many times the length of this isle to get to conventions, but a factor which is crucial in a country where petrol costs three dollars-US a gallon and wages are lower. Mike Glicksohn once commented that the British have a horror of distance whereas what we actually have is a horror of the cost of covering it. Over here distance is more sensibly measured in £'s rather than miles, all forms of public transport reflecting high fuel costs. This hasn't stopped Scots fans from travelling down for cons in the past and it won't stop me from travelling up there for ALBACON 2 (though it was enough to prevent me attending the first ALBACON in 1980, when I was less solvent) - always assuming there is an ALBACON 2, of course.

Given the large degree of overlap in their committees the first reports reaching civilisation from the wild north of a split between con-chairman Blob Shaw (as he will hereinafter be called to avoid confusion with the real Bob Shaw) and the committee of FAIRCON, the Scottish regional convention, caused some concern over the implications for ALBACON. It looked as if the unthinkable could happen, as if ALBACON could collapse and leave us without an Eastercon for the first time since 1957 (though the first British convention was held forty five years ago the 1983 con marks the first unbroken quarter century run of Eastercons). It would be too late to reactivate METROCON and the chances of anyone else getting an alternative together at such short notice would be slight. A gloomy scenario. In the meantime ALBACON PRL arrived and announced that Blob was no longer associated with the convention, there was no hint of further problems, and all seemed well. However, as I was typing

the preceeding (two lines from the bottom of the previous page, in fact) the phone rang and I listened in amazement as A Normally Reliable Source poured forth a strange and wondrous tale into my shocked and shell-like ear. What follows may well be scurrilous rumour-mongering of the sort practiced by the gutter-press (ie. ANSIBLE), but my informant tells me that far from resigning from the ALBACON committee Blob considers that they have resigned from him and intends to go ahead with ALBACON on his own. If this is indeed the case it raises an interesting point and not one, so far as I'm aware, that is covered by any precedent. Namely: if a con committee splits which faction has a mandate to run the convention? Not having given the situation much thought, because it had never arisen prior to this, I suppose I would have said that the larger faction held the mandate, but is that necessarily so? There are no precedents or guidelines to follow -which brings to mind the old idea of an Eastercon charter...and the old objections about there being no body capable of enforcing it. I suppose a system could be established to give the BSFA the role of arbiter in such situation, but this wouldn't necessarily ensure an unbiased decision. In a case such as this fandom's anarchic nature may well work against it, and while I've no idea what the outcome will be I'll watch events unfold with interest. It looks as if my thoughts at the end of the last page were premature and that the 1983 Eastercon may not yet be out of the woods.

Just what Blob or his ex-crew have in store for us next Easter will not become clear until we actually get there, of course (though we know they're after our kidneys*), but their announced intention of making the TAFF winner, whoever she may be, Fan Guest of Honour (as METROCON also intended) is A Very Good Idea since it could be argued, and indeed shortly will be argued, that TAFF winners are the only people who should be FGoH's at British conventions. The reasoning behind this assertion stems from the simple question: why? Why should we make anyone FGoH? Being a Guest of Honour of any sort involves the individual concerned being honoured in some fashion, but why should we choose to so honour a fellow fan and what purpose does a FGoH serve in the context of the convention? Supposedly the person chosen is being honoured either for outstanding services to fandom or, more usually, for producing consistently high-quality fanwork over a long period, and as they are normally required to give a speech, a fanroom interview, or perform in some other fashion, they plainly have to be witty and intelligent people rather than inarticulate lumps whose only personality is the paper persona they display on the pages of a fanzine. In this regard past choices of such people as Peter Roberts, Dave Langford, Leroy Kettle, and the Charnocks were good

((* A somewhat unfair reference to the Kidney Donor cards the committee included with PRL for those who felt inclined to carry them, people such as myself who were too idle to make the effort to acquire a card themselves but who are quite happy for any bits which might help preserve the life of another human being to be removed from what is, after all, an otherwise useless lump of meat after you've departed this mortal coil.))

ones, particularly as in the last two cases it also resulted in the first new issues of their fanzines (though also the final ones as it turned out) in a long while, but is this reason enough? If having a FGoH becomes established as a tradition at Eastercons then very soon, given the size of British fandom, we will run out of people who are deserving of the honour and, even sooner, run out of people witty and articulate enough to function in that capacity. Unless the same people start coming around for a second and even a third time and we end up establishing a pool of fans who are made FGoH when their turn arrives (as one could almost be forgiven for thinking is happening to the position of pro-GoH at NOVACON if one were trying to come up with an explanation as to why witty and articulate SF-writer Robert Holdstock has yet to be honoured), which is a grim prospect indeed. The 1984 Eastercon bidding committee of which I am a member has decided not to have a FGoH and the preceeding is why I, at least, voted against and why I hope we set a precedent and break the tradition of an Eastercon FGoH before it gets too well established.

All good and well, you might say, but why then should the same not be applied to the TAFF- winner? There are a number of reasons why not. What makes the TAFF- winner different is that here is someone who is an ambassador for their fandom and their country, someone we supposedly think of highly enough to have donated sums of money to bring over. Here is someone who will be seen at the one British convention and possibly never another (unlike those we choose to honour from among our own ranks), someone who is deserving of being a Guest of Honour by being, quite simply, our guest.

In EPSILON 10 I said that I had "...considered doing a column composed entirely of quotations, the points I wanted to make arising entirely from the juxtaposition of the pieces quoted." It would have gone something like this.....

"If you re-read the column you'll see that I concluded that a political dimension to fanzines is inevitable but that I thought party political arguments to be 'divisive and futile', which I still maintain."

.....Rob Hansen, EPSILON 8.

"Rob Hansen's response to the introduction of politics into fandom strikes me as similar to Doreen Rogers's...(though) where she's trying to keep us free of any particular ideological line he's trying to keep us... free of politics altogether, thus revealing an even more reactionary line of attack."

.....Joseph Nicholas, TAPPEN 3.

"...STOP BREAKING DOWN 7, the first issue in more than three years and a bit disappointing (but then it was so good before that it could never live up to the anticipation preceeding its re-launch)."

.....Rob Hansen, PONG 22.

"Whatever may be said about the most recent issue of the (revived) STOP BREAKING DOWN by Hansen et al, I suspect that they are responding to it with such enthusiasm because it has been written and published by Pickersgill

.....Joseph Nicholas, PONG 25.

"...if they can't think straight then they can't read properly, and if they can't read properly then they can't write to save their lives..."

.....Joseph Nicholas, NABU 11.

...CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING APPROACHING A SUITABLE LEAD-IN TO.....

LETTERS

LETTERS.....so let's just get on with it then.

LETTERS

A number of people who responded to the section of the last NOTIONS column dealing with the 'fannish foundation' made interesting observations and raised valid objections to the proposal. After considering their views I decided that a reply was needed that took into account the points they raised as a whole, so rather than respond to those letters as they pop up I've gathered my thoughts on each into a sort of unified response that appears at the end of this loccol.....Ed.

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I haven't been loccing much lately, which has its disadvantages. I worry constantly that I'll stop getting EPSILON or TAPPEN or whatever. I wouldn't want to be cut off from British fandom just now, when it's beginning to be like the Good Ol' Days when DOT, TWLL DDU, TRIODE, and SEAMONSTERS were coming out one after another. I almost missed all of that, that terrific Golden Age of Fabled Giants. 1978, wasn't it?

Perhaps the Americans are having a period of fannish renewal. It has a curious claustrophobic feel to it, but it can't be denied that the current exemplars of fan pubbing - PONG, TELOS, BOONFARK, GAMBIT, BEARDMUTTERINGS, MAINSTREAM, etc. - are intrinsically better reading than the best American fandom could throw up a couple or three years ago, when about all there was around beside my own *coff* modest publications was HOLIER THAN THOU. But Canadian fandom doesn't seem to have had a Golden Age since the early seventies. Since about 1978 I would argue that it has ceased to matter to fanzine fandom, apart from two or three individuals. The reason for this, as far as I can tell, is that most fans here seem to come out of a very conservative domestic background, whose ideas of fandom seem to no further than to the elementary level of cuddling cats and telling feghoots. Dull, very dull. I left an apa recently that was full of dull people, and tried to tell them as politely as I could that I found them, um..."intellectually incurious". Those who reacted seemed to feel that I'd accused them of not liking punk music and new wave graphics, and had said therefore they were bad people. But I'd specifically said that these issues were only the most immediately obvious, and that there was a broad spectrum of contemporary issues, topics, movements, developments, and events that never seemed to be discussed by the fans in that apa. To my great delight, with British fanzines I do read about A Confederacy of Dunces, Echo and the Bunnymen, Francis Ford Coppola, and Philip Glass (instead of Han Solo or the Irish Rovers).

I don't know of many occasions where fanartists have viciously criticised each other, but nasty remarks are sometimes made. Lately a few barbed comments have been aimed at the convention artware genre - the dragons, unicorns, and fairy princesses that fans with cuteness-deficiencies and middle-class incomes buy in job lots at Worldcons. The craftwork of artists like Victoria Poyser,

Wendy Pini, and Vicky Wyman, to be specific. You see...unlike most fanartists I'm quite willing to squirt bile across the page while talking about fan art.

By and large, though, I've not found it worth the effort. Most fans are as visually sophisticated as the readers of PERRY RHODAN were sophisticated literarily. Probably less so. The majority of fan art appearing in US fanzines, at least, is atrocious crap. I don't care whether self-expression is intrinsically good or not - it should never see print. Even a lot of the better fan art has a mediocrity and sameness to it that makes it tiresome after a while. But criticism doesn't seem to have any effect other than branding the critic as intolerant. Or, in my special case, as an artist myself, self-centred. People like what they like, and the prevailing opinion over here is that people not only have a right to their own opinion, but that their opinion is as right as the next person's.

British fan artists are different. At worst you can call them competent, like yourself. But what's significantly different about British fan artists is that they seem to fill a different role than American (or Canadian or Australian) artists. They aren't interior decorators or the literal version of station identification. At first glance, a Bell, or Barker, or ATom, or Jeeves, seems a traditional embellishment of a British fanzine, something you publish because you are publishing a fannish British zine. But that would be making a special case of fanart that I don't think is justified. One might as well say that one publishes a Joe Nicholas fanzine review column because it wouldn't be a British fanzine without one. No, the essence of it is not symbolic, it's social. Harry or Jim or Rob are people you drink with, correspond with, and publish, like you publish the work of your other friends and acquaintances. Just like once-upon-a-time American fans published stuff by the people they knew, and in some quarters still do - though knowing a person is not of itself a guarantee of quality. It's just fandom's good luck that the Brits are above-average talented people.

The closest analogue to British fandom at the moment is the small group associated with PONG and TELOS. It is not without differences, though. The conspicuous absence of 90% of North American fandom in PONG's private universe is bound to feel more constrained than what I take to be the natural exclusion of background noise by British fanzines. Also, PONG seems to try rather too hard to produce a fannish mythology around itself and comes across as self-centred instead. Ted doesn't so much talk about himself too much (we all talk about ourselves) as measure himself against other fans. Rather than censoring Ted for this, though, I think fandom should formalise Ted's ego as the 'White Scale'. A zine could be reviewed, measured against PONG, and register .5 or .7 or .1 on the White Scale. But a zine better than PONG would be Whiter than White.

TED WHITE

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EPSILON 11 is here and I haven't written to you about 10! Clearly yours is not really a quarterly schedule - and I applaud. Your comments about regular and frequently-appearing fanzines in issue 11 are dead on. I distinctly felt the long pause (or so it seemed) between issues 9 and 10, and the

appearance of issue 11 before I'd started anticipating it was a welcome relief.

In response to my letter you ask about the 'connections with fandom' of the sixties counterculture here. Well, I don't know all of them but here are a few:

Paul Krassner, editor-publisher of THE REALIST, was a friend and acquaintance of several fans, myself among them. (Steve Stiles' famous cartoon depicting the graffiti, "Hugh Heffner is a Virgin!" first appeared in THE REALIST. My first wife, Sylvia, had poetry published in the magazine. And I contributed several articles - one of which is yet to be published in the long overdue Tenth Annish, which, if it had been published on schedule, would have insured my immortality by giving the language "55" as an easy way of alluding to anal sex, in the same way in which "69" has become a symbol for mutual oral sex. Paul also attended a few conventions and in 1962 met Walt Willis in New York City...) THE REALIST pre-dated the sixties counterculture but contributed to it, and Paul became a yippie as an inevitable (I suppose) consequence of tripping with Tim Leary at Milbrook.

Chester Anderson, well-known SF-writer, author of The Butterfly Kid, et al, was part of The Communications Company, a fixture in Haight-Ashbury in the 1967 period. He was a part of some famous Acid Tests with the Grateful Dead, Keasy, et al.

Paul Williams, founder of CRAWDADDY magazine (the first rock magazine) and author of any number of self-celebrating books like Apple Bay, Outlaw Blues, Das Energi, Right to Pass, and Coming was, and maybe still is, a fan, who put out a fanzine in the early sixties and belonged to a private apa (of which I was also a member) in the seventies.

While I don't know of any direct connections to either Keasy or Cassady, the latter was the most written-about member of the beat generation before becoming the driver of Keasy's bus. He was a major character in Clellon, Holmes' Go, and the major character in On The Road. Holmes was at one time Don Wollheim's assistant at Ace Books (in the fifties), which is why Ace (of all publishers) published both Go and William Burroughs' early classic, Junkie (under the pseudonym of "William Lee").

Pete Stampfel, who was a member of sixties band The Holy Modal Rounders (and also The Fuggs), and is currently a member of the Unholy Modal Rounders, was a member of the last gasp of the Futurians, a late-fifties NYC fanclub, and played a pivotal if unwitting role in the creation of the Fanoclats, the fanclub that dominated NYC fandom in the sixties. Pete still attends conventions (I saw him at Noreascon II in Boston and at last year's Westercon in California) and recently married Don Wollheim's daughter Betsy. I've known Pete since 1959 or thereabouts.

I'm sure others can supply further connections. Ray Nelson, for instance, was one of the original Beats, back in the forties. Many fans over the years have lived bohemian lives which brought them into contact with kindred souls who were involved in whatever form the counterculture was then taking. A number of fanartists became involved in underground comics, for instance, from George Metzger to Dan Steffan and Steve Stiles, and not forgetting Jay Kinney. Robert Crumb was in EC and comics fandom in the fifties; I used to see one-of-a-kind comics done by both him and his brother back in the late fifties. We

are all loosely alligned and in vague contact. We may not know each other but we know of each other. Art Kleps, who was part of the scene with Larry at Milbrook, and wrote the book, Milbrook, about that experience (I recommend it highly), founded the Neo-American Church - a church devoted to the psychedelic sacrament. One of the members of that church is Mark Kearnes, who is the Bon Vivant of Pennsylvania (the former title was Primate, but that was too close to a genuine RC church title so it was changed; the church does not believe in titles that can be taken seriously). Mark is also a fan and has done much over the years to bring the sacraments of the Church to SF cons, notably Nitrous Oxide. (The 1976 Worldcon was heavily Nitrous-Oxided by the Church.)

During the brief year I edited HEAVY METAL, I got into contact with a number of the writers and artists connected with the sixties counterculture; unfortunately my time there was too brief to get most of them into the magazine. I did get Spain into the Rock Issue, however.

Your suggestion, in NOTIONS, of a 'foundation' to systematically reminé fandom's past for the benefit of its future is something to ponder and I have several reactions, none of them fully thought out as yet, I'm afraid.

To begin with the notion of another bureaucracy in fandom, trailing after the BSFA and N3F, gives me the horrors. Oh, you might be able to find the necessary able and willing fans to get it launched but inevitably they will be replaced or displaced by fans less interested in the purpose of the project than in its politics. They will see it as a measure of their status and all too soon transform it even as the N3F was transformed from the original idea proposed by Damon Knight. This has happened many times before. The people best qualified to do the job will be the least willing. Politics will be played over the selection of the reprints and what to reprint first. The very nature of a committee works against success.

But I've also been having second thoughts about fan-reprints. Context is enormously important. Assuming that the item in question is reprinted the context of what it is reprinted into is doubly important. Most reprints work better in fanzines than in anthologies of such. Reprints which stand alone as separate publications rarely have the impact that they do in almost any other context. There are obvious exceptions, of course; WARHOON 28 is the most successful anthology I can think of, mainly because Bergeron does supply a context for everything in the issue, both through introductory notes and prefaces and through his choice of non-Willis material, of which there is a great deal (more than enough to fill the pages of most fanzines). And Jeanne Gomoll's CACHER OF THE RYE succeeds because the centrepiece (which I regard as rather weak anyway) is surrounded by context-creating material, especially Terry Carr's fine lengthy introduction, which virtually recreates one aspect of fifties fandom. But Willis has been reprinted before, and the 1961 Fields-Johnstone reprints (THE WILLIS PAPERS) were far less appealing.

You seem to feel that individual fanzine reprints (such as BOONFARK'S) are scattershot and unlikely to provide enough material to meet the need, but I think they make more sense, precisely because the surrounding fanzine and the introductory material provide a fresh context. Terry Carr's floating series of Entropy Reprints, which have appeared in many fanzines, are a good example.

Your own use of the Brosnan piece in this issue of EPSILON is another. Not only have you provided a relevant context for the reprint itself, you've used it in the context of your fanzine, as a natural component of that fanzine, giving it new purpose as well. This, to me, is more a part of that "ongoing act of constant creation" you spoke of earlier - and with which I agree.

In other words, the best way to keep fanhistory in circulation is by making it part of what is current, and not embalming it in special memorials which can be sneered at and dismissed as Phil Palmer has WARHOON 28.

I really like the cover on issue 11, This was a very successful collaboration. Harry's inks have softened the architectually precise Hansen lines. The splatter-shading goes nicely with the thick lines; I always think of the Cooper Black typeface in this context, a context evocative of the first few decades of the century. Nicely done.

Brian Earl Brown will be confounded if TAPPEN 4 ever appears; its cover is by Dan Steffan and he does a very creditable scene - drawn, of course, to Malcolm's instructions. Dan has done a lot of fine scenes in the course of both his illustration work (which has appeared professionally in AMAZING, FANTASTIC, and GALAXY) and his comics (which range from his ILLUSTRATED ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR to his underground work in DOPE COMIX and BIZARRE SEX and his aboveground work in HEAVY METAL). As Dan remarked to me this afternoon "I guess Rob and I will have to do a collaboration". It seems like a good idea to me. ((Me too...which is why such a collaboration will appear soon.))

In NOTIONS you said, "What this comes down to, once again, is whether you view criticism in terms of a personal attack on the individual being called to task, or as an attempt to maintain and improve standards and thus a vital part of the fannish process." Although you were writing in a different context (fanzine criticism) I think your paragraph applies fairly well to John D. Owen's paragraph addressed to me. He gives me "the 'biggest twit' award this issue" for my "personal attack" on him. And he accuses me of "freaking out". That strikes me as a bit of an overreaction. There was no intention on my part of making a "personal attack" on Owen, whom I know not at all. I was addressing what I saw as a "tacit assumption" on his part, and if in fact it was not that at all, I humbly apologise to the testy Mr. Owen for having attached his name to it, but it is an attitude I've seen reflected in others' thinking and I will stand behind my observation and my response to that attitude. Delete "Owen's" from that second paragraph on p.16 of EPSILON 10 and I think the rest can stand safely without provoking further attack, at least from Mr. Owen.

BRIAN EARL BROWN

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I do hope you realise that what I was saying in that paragraph where I compared your style to Dan Steffan's was that, yes, I can talk about art easily enough, and even about styles as dissimilar as yours and Dan's. I picked on Dan because he is an orange to your apple. It's interesting that you mention Harry Bell as having a similar style to Dan's (which he does) because one would not realise that Harry had inked the cover to EPSILON 11 if you hadn't mentioned it. The cover looked very typically Hansen. Only the use of

a lot of shading, which is untypical of your somewhat outlinish style, could have cued anyone in to Harry's participation. You should take pride in the fact that your style is so distinct and strong that it dominates any collaboration.

I'm not sure what to make of the Kettle and Brosnan articles. Kettle really seems out to do a hatchet job on Brosnan. The bile is waist deep through out Kettle's piece and it's a little choking. Does he really and truly hate Brosnan so? Do we really want to know how much Kettle dislikes this Brosnan fellow? I don't believe a fanzine should be all sweetness and light, but there is something repellent about someone going on and on so enthusiastically but humourlessly. (I don't sense that Kettle was joking about his feeling toward Brosnan.) It is a display of bad form.

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Kettle is proving himself master of the instantly funny phrase. Stuff like "Having the critical ability of a pebble..." and "Derek's attractive wife, Mrs,..." are just thrown off every few lines while a line like "Send for Arthur Koestler and a big hammer immediately" is fucking wonderful. Could have done with a few more gratuitous insults, though, to make it crackle a bit.

Brosnan's article struck me as the sort of thing I could knock off in about five minutes. Very slight, though amusing. Perhaps I've been misleading myself for the past year or so but if I did write something like this I'd feel that I'd sold myself short; if I then sent it to a fanzine I'd feel I'd sold the editor short. Brosnan's just too glib, distorting to the point of untruth characters and incidents just for the sake of a quick laugh. This is arbitrary criticism though, begging questions like What Is Truth and Is Art True. Epistemological and ontological problems over Brosnan, yet.

((Yes, well. The problem with free-flowing and apparently effortless anecdotal writing is that it looks so easy that people who've never tried their hand at it say things like "this is the sort of thing I could knock off in about five minutes". As wiser heads than I have noted, few types of writing require more effort than the apparently effortless. So while you might think Brosnan's article is "the sort of thing I could knock off in about five minutes", I'd be rather more impressed if you had at some stage done so.))

AVEDON CAROL

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Kettle and Brosnan's pieces were a lot of fun - I wish there was some way to write interesting responses to such things, because they really deserve some sort of extended praise. Alas, all I can really say is that they were a great chuckle and even tho' I was trying not to attract attention I kept laughing and people kept staring at me.

I've no sense of geography, but since I've been known as 'an Armenian' for most of my life, even tho' I've never been there, and now suddenly find myself known as 'an American', even tho', as anyone can plainly see, I'm Armenian, it's difficult for me to think of anyone who lives in London as

anything but 'English' unless they tell me different. Malcolm Edwards responded to this sort of thing by writing to me that "you Texans" had better learn to tell Brits apart. Sigh... Up until recently (the last ten years?) there were The English, and then there were (a) bad Welsh cooks and (b) people who annoyed me by wearing green clothes on St. Patrick's day and uttering irritating phrases like "Everyone is either Irish or wishes they were" and making me listen to Irish folk music. So I suppose it is out of habit that I think of anyone British who doesn't annoy me as "English". The only Welshman I'd ever known before was someone who ruined my digestive tract, after all. I've never known anyone from Scotland at all...

LILIAN EDWARDS

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I always feel a certain reluctance to LoC EPSILON. It's beautifully produced, rarely a typo, well-written in pleasant English, and with a satisfyingly knowledgeable historical perspective. Yet I can't bring myself to solidly praise it...for fairly vague reasons.

Michael Ashley, who has perhaps more stature and courage than myself, gets near when he calls you a "Child of Pickersgill". Of course you should make no secret of your writing influences, but there is a difference between an influence and a patron saint. Obviously Greg is a close friend of yours and bound to crop up in your writing, but I feel you should make some attempt to cut down on your frequent callings upon his authority, even if it takes a conscious effort. There's too much of a shadow of Pickersgill and other names on EPSILON; let Hansen shine through.

I agree with Ashley too that the lettercol seems altogether too retrospective and (dare I say it) American. It's bound to reflect your contents list, of course, which prominently features fanhistory (and that's fine) but I still feel the loccol should be, in general, the most vibrant and active part of a zine. The controversy over the correct addressing of letters to England/GB etc is petty and old-hat; it doesn't deserve to take up your space.

((You are the only fan from one of the Celtic nations who hasn't agreed with the...ah...clarification of this issue in these pages. For instance, your fellow-countryman, Jim Darroch wrote, in his Loc:

"...the substitution of 'English' for 'British' is something that annoys me intensely. It's most annoying when practiced by those who should know better; how long is it going to take the English to realise that their flag is not the Union Jack?"

There are many schools of thought on the importance of a loccol - indeed, Malcolm Edwards recently stated, in Ted White's GAMBIT, that he usually found them the least interesting part of any fanzine - though for myself I attempt to put together the most interesting column I can from the letters to hand. I certainly don't think this column is "too American", though if it seems that way it's probably because it reflects response, which is higher on the American copies. Given that 25 - 30% of my print run is sent to the US a simple count of the letters in this column will, I think, prove the point.))

You're obviously happy with the current format of EPSILON, and for getting out large quantities of quality prose at short and regular intervals you really can't be touched. I just yearn a little for something to upset your regular, immutable features; just something a little more outre than the oft-recounted adventures of the Friends In Space. I wouldn't even mind seeing a bit more of your excellent art than just the front cover.

PAUL KINCAID

114 Guildhall St., Folkestone, Kent CT20 1ES.

Many thanks for EPSILON 11 - god knows how you keep up the standard, and the energy. ((I eat lots of beans.))

In a way the very existence of this letter is the comment I wanted to make. You see, I can't remember the last time a fanzine roused enough interest to make me want to respond. Which ties in with a couple of points made in EPSILON.

Let's face it, these days most of the zines we get do seem to come at conventions. And quite frankly, when I come away from a convention I'm shattered anyway, and the thought of plowing through that mountain of paper is just beyond me. I know that in among them all are things like EPSILON, or NEW RIVER BLUES, or DRILKJIS, things I know are likely to be interesting or entertaining. Even so, the fact that they are buried among all the other pastel tinted pages means that in all probability I will not bother to dig them out.

A single fanzine through the letterbox is something I can handle. I can usually find the time to glance through it at least, and if it's as good as EPSILON then I will read it. But a single fanzine through the letterbox is becoming a rarity these days. Over the last three or four months I have, that I can remember, received four or five fanzines, all of which I have read. So far I haven't read a single thing that I was given at Channelcon, and so long after the event I probably never will.

Of course, if there was anything worth reading in fanzines these days, then I would religiously read every piece of paper thrust into my hand - as I did during my early years in fandom. But to tell the truth, most fannish writing these days simply bores me. TAPPEN, anything by Chris Atkinson, and anything by D. West - that is all I read as a matter of course. I am not one of the privileged few who receives PONG, but by all accounts that is the only other thing in contemporary fandom worth reading.

EVE HARVEY

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John made a very interesting observation this weekend; I was discussing the LoC I'd planned on EPSILON 11 when he said "the only fanzine you ever LoC is EPSILON", to which I replied that it's most probably because it's one of the few fanzines I read all the way through. Then I thought, but why? I have not figured out the answer yet, but it's interesting that both statements are true. Perhaps it's the length; the content; the fact that we're of similar mind on many topics; I don't really know. Also there's the fact that although I do read some other fanzines from cover to cover I very rarely feel sufficiently

motivated to comment on them. Obviously one of fandom's many mysteries yet to be explained.

So onto the third LoC of my fannish career and my third LoC on EPSILON.

I was very interested in your views on fanhistory and am in complete agreement with you that fanthologies are a good idea; not only to record the best of fanzine writing/artwork, but also to bring into sharp relief the innate 'feel' of a particular period. This could provide an insight for those who participated in fanzines during that period, and be useful for those who came after. I think both MOOD 70 and BY BRITISH succeed here, even though they are very much a personalised view of the 70s. This problem is easily overcome by having several contributors - but more of that later.

I know you are not well disposed towards the BSFA, but since you say "in this one instance fandom made a strong and concerted effort to safeguard its future" with this institution, you should be able to answer your question, "What then...of its past?". The BSFA is the perfect organisation to arrange a national anthology and to finance it. It would also, then, have the added advantage of not only being available to those who lived through the period under review, but would also be easily accessible to new fans entering via the BSFA route. (Which, though berated, I firmly believe still happens on a far larger scale than many people either realise or are willing to admit.) It is the responsibility of the BSFA to help with projects like this - things that might not get done on a private scale because of the cost, or might not be continued due to gaffiation of the editor, etc. It would also broaden the scope of the BSFA's special projects - counterbalancing the serconness (?) of the bibliographies being compiled by Paul Kincaid and Geoff Rippington with the best of fannish activity. It would help keep the BSFA alive and be another way of letting those members on the outskirts of fandom know what they're missing.

It would be great to have an annual anthology of the best British fanwriting/artwork etc., for each year, which could then be amalgamated into an overview whenever fandom has undergone a significant and discernable change. As you say, however, BY BRITISH and MOOD 70 fail because of the items they omit - fandom is a very experience and so must be its writing. It would lose a lot if you tried to remove the subjective and get an unbiased overview. Thus I don't feel that Joe Nicholas failed but Ian Maule did by providing only one overview of the period. We all have our different ideas and tastes and it would be far more interesting, and valid, to have the different perspectives illustrated. You'll never please everyone, but you could satisfy far more people by having several contributors giving their analysis of the time period under consideration and their favourite pieces from fanzines produced then. This would help all of us, especially newcomers, see more clearly the divergences/convergences of opinion. OK, it would take quite a lot of work to ensure there isn't tedious re-statement of the same points, but surely that's why you have an editor rather than a compiler, isn't it? In fact, I feel so excited about the idea that I'm physically restraining myself from shouting "I'll do it!", not because I feel in any way especially qualified for the job, but because too many good ideas are lost in prevarication.

Keep up the good work Rob, and when I've figured out why EPSILON is the only fanzine I've ever locced, I'll let you know.

DARROLL PARDOE

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You want dissent? Then dissent you shall have. You quote Kevin Smith as saying that the sixties were 'friendly and nice and nine-tenths dead' in British fandom. Not so, not so at all. I have a feeling that when people like Kevin say that they mean only the last two or three years of that decade. It is presumably pure coincidence that I was living in the USA at the time, and I'd probably agree that British fandom (so far as I could tell from my trans-Atlantic viewpoint) was fairly low then (though it did produce Peter Roberts), but what about the major part of the decade? It was anything but friendly and nice. The years 1962-63 when the 'New Wave' of fans hit British fandom were a period of turmoil and social change such as fandom in this country had never seen before. All those new fans came on the scene (partly as a result of the BSFA's propoganda efforts) with new ideas about what fanzines should be like - they even wanted to discuss science fiction in them, an unheard of idea. (Doesn't this sound familiar?). Prominent among the 'New Wave' were Peter Weston and Charles Platt, who stirred things up - especially the latter, who had a gift for feuding with almost everybody at one time or another.

Suddenly, in 1963, fandom became a much more lively, and interesting, place to be. New groups sprang up all over the country, including the first BSFG which promptly took over and brought out of hibernation the BSFA, spawned lots of fanzines and eventually ran a convention (the 1965 Eastercon). British fandom doubled or trebled in size in the space of a couple of years. Dave Hale and Jim Linwood tried (and succeeded) in being provocative in the pages of LES SPINGE - the review by Jim of New Wave fanzines ('price only six pence for thirty pages') comes particularly to mind and generated lots of flak.

There was bound to be a reaction, of course, and it happened in the last years of the decade which is probably the time Kevin was thinking about. After a while the FOULER incursion made things interesting again. I think that's the way fandom is bound to progress; by fits and starts.

I don't think it's particularly helpful to get all nostalgic about fan history. Fandom is a social entity set in the present, and it's fun to be a part of as it changes. I don't want to go back to fandom's past, either in person or vicariously through the written word. I enjoy fandom as it is and look forward to how it will be in future, a future which by my presence in it I can help to shape. The idea of a whole fanzine devoted to the past is deathly - who cares?

BILL BREIDING

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I found it rather humourous to be receiving EPSILON 11 after reading your editorial because not only have I been gaffiated (more or less) for several years, but I'm also a prime contender (or offender) from the mid-70s of the American Mush School of Writing in Fandom. Americans are just a bunch of saps who wear their hearts on their sleeves.

Being an American, I enjoy the British fanzines I run across (mostly in Rich Coad's elite stack of fmz), as it would seem most Americans do. Americans

are, however, too hasty to run down their own variety of fmz by agreeing with the British that US fanzines stink and UK fanzines are the greatest.

I never could understand this. If the majority of US fans feel this way, why aren't we producing British fmz instead of these crappy emotional rags that the British find so offensive in their own private little ways? Why aren't Americans sharpening their wits and finding ways towards the elite intelligentsia, so that we can find new ways to insult and make fun of each other and know in our hearts that others will never know our private parts?

I do like your fanzine. Keep me on the mailing list?

((Of course.

In that part of my last NOTIONS column that you've reacted to I was, of course, referring to pre-1981 American fanzines, matters having improved since. So much so in fact that for the first time since I became active in fandom some seven years ago, I find that more of the fanzines I really enjoy come from the US rather than the UK. It seems that the majority of the best of today's US zines come from the Washington area - both DC and state - which, since the current American fanzine revival was sparked off in part by the WASH, is rather apt.))

RICH BROWN

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Besides the differences in our "common" language, and those obvious in our respective cultures which you bring up, there are also differences in UK/US fannish attitudes. One example of this - of which I've been aware on an unconscious level but never really thought much about until this issue of EPSILON - is your concern over getting "new blood" into UK fandom. This makes it possible to understand why you have to be polite and put up with assholes like Michael Ashley. Over here, on the other hand, the concern is not so much how to get the "new blood" in as to keep the barbarian invasion out; with worldcons and larger regionals experiencing attendance in the multiple thousands, hotels no longer vie with each other for our favour (few hotels, even in major cities, are large enough for us now), since in many cases we end up booking two or more to take up the overflow. As a substantial number of these attendees are Star Warriors or Trekkies, or other media types, we end up paying, via our membership fees, a "fair" share of costs for things to entertain them at our conventions - the 11,387th showing of "Amok Time", for example. Some of us find this less than reasonable, which is why we often demonstrate how we don't have to put up with, or be polite to, twits either like or different from Michael Ashley.

((The problem here is that I'm not in any way "putting up with" Michael Ashley since his letters are always interesting and entertaining, even though I usually disagree with what he has to say. As I said last issue, I regard Ashley as one of a handful of newer British fans of obvious ability (though he's done very little constructive with it as yet), and his letters are certainly better-written and more internally consistent than those of, say, Joseph Nicholas. Yes, Ashley is acerbic (sardonic, even), and one could take his comments on Richard Bergeron last issue as being gratuitously insulting, but so what? He'll probably grow out of

that, hopefully without losing his sharp edge, and save the insults for those who are more deserving of them. I dunno - quite a few US fans took umbrage at Ashley's letter but it certainly didn't seem to me in any way somethin I should have found offensive, and not printed. I suppose my reaction is a result of me being 'brought up' in the British fandom of the 70s when this sort of thing was commonplace, and is no doubt why I was non-plussed when Vinç Clarke commented, in a recent letter:

"I noted that there didn't appear any refutation of the attitude which made the editorial of MOOD 70 read like a clinical description of a new psychosis -the Big Frog in a Little Pond Syndrome- and it was being discussed in PONG as if MOOD 70 was something to be proud of.....just a moment while I wipe the froth from my lips."))

WAHF: Jeanne Gomoll: "It's a little late to tell you now, but I contracted a near-fatal case of hiccups laughing over Leroy Kettle's con-report. After two hours I managed to calm myself, quell the recurrent giggles and stop the hiccups by thinking Serious Thoughts. It wasn't easy." It's never too late, Jeanne, particularly as somebody else who weighs in with similarly late, though less favourable, comments is none other than...Terry Carr: "The comments in the lettercol about Leroy Kettle's article about farting remind me that I hated that piece too. I agree with you that such bodily functions are nothing shocking, but I wonder why so many Britfans find such things tittersome. Strikes me as terribly adolescent. (But I'll bet F.T.Laney would have loved it: he seemed to be fascinated with anything having to do with the anus. I love much of Laney's fanwriting, but don't always agree with his humourous enthusiasms.)" I don't think finding such things 'tittersome' is peculiar to British fans so much as being more a cultural thing. There's long been a tradition of such humour over here, it's leading current exponent being Scots comedian Billy Connolly. Humour, as has been observed, doesn't always travel well. Harry Andruschak wrote and didn't mention JPL once nor, strangely enough, did Steven J.Green, Martin Lock, Terry Hill, Arnold Akien or Roelof Goudriaan...though Gloria McMillan came close. Since it'll do him good to be WAHFed once in a while not a single word will be quoted from Mike Glicksohn's LoC this time.....oh, all right then: "Just a short belated note on EPSILON to let you know that it remains one of the few fanzines I want to be sure of getting. The cover is a delight and the content and writing continue to be quintessentially fannish"....sorry, I just couldn't resist it. JohnD.Owen commented on John Brosnan's piece, which he said "...made me laugh - but the space would have been better spent encouraging somebody to write something as humourous now." Great idea John, but who did you have in mind? If you know someone capable of doing this sort of thing, and doing it as well, I'd be very interested in being put in touch with them. Jackie Causgrove: "The urge to disco that so many fans display puzzles me. But then there are those who look askance at the group I'm with playing poker. To each their own I suppose. But dancing? At a con? What will be the next rage? Discussing SF?" There have been discos at most of the cons I've attended since my first some seven years ago, so if I ever make it to a US con I'm sure the lack of a disco will feel very peculiar. To each their own, as you say. Also heard from were Dave Locke, Alun Harries, and Dave Collins who promised a proper LoC Real Soon Now.....

...THE EDITOR STRIKES BACK.....OR TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, THIS IS.....

THE END BIT

THE END BIT.....a sort of reply.

THE END BIT

In a part of his letter not used in the loccol proper Michael Ashley reveals that he is...

"...very surprised indeed that in your editorial you fail to mention SPACE JUNK 5 in which Rich Coad makes some similar comments to yourself. For example,

'Why, I wondered, has there not been anything more than sporadic attempts to reprint great fannish writing?...why doesn't fandom form some type of consortium, with a rotating body of officials or elected officials as in the Faan awards committee, who would then attempt to reprint editions of great fannish writing, and then keep the things in print, selling them at various cons and through fanzines?'

The truth of the matter is that I'd forgotten about Rich's editorial, because while I rely on my memory to tell me where to find a particular piece I wish to quote, it is not infallible (and the last SPACE JUNK was published a l-o-o-ong time ago, or so it seems). What is interesting about all this is that it demonstrates once again the way in which certain ideas and themes regularly surface in fandom, particularly as what I thought I'd done in the last NOTIONS column was merely expand on something I'd suggested in the first one back in 1978 in EPSILON 4.

On reading the various responses to the notion of a 'fannish foundation' as set out last issue I find myself agreeing with Ted White on the practical problems in such an enterprise. Even if those most obviously able to get the thing off the ground were willing to get involved the chances of them staying the course would be slight. Internal politicking would creep in, disputes arise, and the whole thing fall apart...as a study of the sorry history of fannish organisations would show. Which is not to say that I now think the idea is a bad one just that I accept the factors which would tend to make it impractical, factors that I had given more than passing thought to before writing my piece. Why then write it as I did? Because NOTIONS is not in any way intended to be words of wisdom carved on stone tablets and handed down from the mountain, but rather a way of eliciting a response, of provoking discussion on the issues presented with the hope, perhaps, of getting a new angle on things into the bargain. This doesn't happen every time but once in a while, just when it's least expected, a LoC comes out of left field that leads to a re-assessment.

Before receiving Eve Harvey's letter I thought the LoCs I'd received up to then had covered all the many responses to the idea of a 'fannish foundation' but Evelyn brought up something I hadn't considered. Much of the objection to the idea (expressed in unused letters as well as in Ted's) centred around the inevitable internal politicking and other hassles associated with any fannish bureaucracy, objections I concede to be valid. Why not, then, seek to establish something along the lines suggested under the auspices of an existing bureaucracy that functions reasonably well? An obvious idea you might think - which

it is - and one I might well have thought of eventually myself, had I not had what some might call a negative attitude towards the BSFA (some, but not necessarily me). If Evelyn could swing something like this I'd be rather more inclined to look favourably upon the organisation because such a venture might help restore the BSFA's original purpose, whose (not always total, but often effective) absence in years gone by has been at the root of much of my own attitude.

The idea of an annual anthology of the best writing to appear in British fanzines in the preceeding year is a good one - so good in fact that a look at the list of contents in Patrick Nielsen Hayden's FANTHOLOGY 1981 might lead one to think he'd had the same idea (ho ho ho) - though I'd like the idea better if it could be expanded to take in more of the good material of the past than merely that produced in the preceeding year. If this fanthology was, say, a twice-yearly venture one of the issues could be of the type mentioned above with the other concentrating on a period rather more removed from the present. Both would have to have the pieces reprinted embedded in context-creating editorial material (Ted is perfectly correct in stating the importance of this) up to and including bibliographical data and critical appraisals. However, while the powers-that-be and membership of the BSFA might well accept the establishing of the former fanthology I doubt very much if they would accept the latter. So it goes.

"The idea of a whole fanzine devoted to the past" declared Darroll Par-doe, "is deathly - who cares?" Well actually, Darroll, I do. If I didn't all the preceeding, and the NOTIONS column that inspired it, would be (to quote Greg Pickersgill - sorry Lilian) "as pointless as pushing peanuts up the Pennines with your penis". Someone else who obviously cared was Joe D. Siclari whose fanzine, FANHISTORICA, was indeed "a whole fanzine devoted to the past" and I was lucky enough to acquire a copy of the first issue (dated June 1976) during the writing of this piece. Strangely, I found the context setting material (and Lee Hoffman's fascinating reminiscing on QUANDRY's life and times) to be more interesting than the reprints, probably because they are about numbered fandoms, a concept I find pretty silly anyway. I understand why Siclari chose to reprint the Speer and Silverberg pieces in the first issue - I might well have done the same myself had I embarked on a similar venture - but I can't say that I was in any way stimulated by them.

In another piece reprinted in FANHISTORICA Harry Warner Jr points out that:

"Very often today's fan is badly disappointed when he finally holds in his hands at last a copy of some famous fan publication of the past. In fandom as in other places too big a build-up is damaging to the topic: in imagination the unknown and desired object takes on proportions and qualities it couldn't hope to possess in actuality. Then there's the Zeitgeist factor. Today's fan can't see the famous publications of the past through yesterday's eyes."

Michael Ashley touches on the same thing in his letter when he says...

"I'm curious as to what's gone before, if only to confirm my suspicion that it's not actually as good as everybody claims it is...."

There is also something in the present that Ashley considers "not as good as everybody claims it is", as demonstrated by him saying that my...

"...comment that these (70s) fanzines were 'of a quality that only TAPPEN of today's British zines can really match' leaves me wondering since TAPPEN isn't (surely?) that wonderful (at most I would say that it's 'competant' or 'adequate' - but it isn't, unless you're very undemanding, worthy of as much praise as it has received)."

The Harry Warner Jr quote above is taken from an article titled " A LOOK AT 'AH! SWEET IDIOCY!'", A!SH! being a "famous fan publication of the past" whose reputation has reached down through the years, even to someone as far removed in time and space from the events it chronicles as myself, and a text I will probably never get to read. Which I regret. However, some items do reach down through the years in physical form and it's surprising what you sometimes come across in a pile of old fanzines....

I was visiting the Pickersgills last weekend and while there got the chance to take what I wanted from a large pile of old fanzines, Greg having decided to thin out his collection. As I expected, there wasn't a large amount of stuff I wanted (Greg's taste in fanzines being so similar to mine he naturally hung onto the material I'd really like to get my hands on), but there were one or two gems. As well as the FANHISTORICA I picked up a number of issues of Hank and Lesleigh Luttrell's STARLING and a random selection of zines reaching back almost thirty years. Reading some of them in 1982 is a strange experience, particularly some of the oldest which exude a curious...well.... innocence. For example, an (incomplete) copy of the sixth issue of Don Allen's SATELLITE from 1955 (with a photo-cover that features, among others, a youthful Harlan Ellison in jacket and tie) included a report on that year's Eastercon. Here Allen describes the scene when he first enters the con-hall...

"Eric Jones is a real tru-fannish character and wore over the whole weekend a most wonderful beanie, it had aerials and antennae sticking out from all over it...A few minutes later, after I had put the copies and leaflets of SATELLITE onto my table, the hall started to fill up and zap-guns were appearing so I decided to go around and meet people."

Zap-guns were, of course, water-pistols. On another occasion Allen and Ron Bennett (later to win TAFF) entered the hall and were...

"...pounced upon by George Lye, a NezFez man.

'Wanna buy Gestalt?' he slurred.

'Gestalt - what the blinkin' dickens is that?'

'It's our new fanzine, costs a bob, now c'mon, here buy a copy -' "

Did people ever really say things like 'blinkin' dickens' I wonder, or did Allen use it as a euphemism for 'fuck'? Whatever, there's something in SATELLITE that shows it to be the product of another time far more clearly than any of the above. In his opening remarks Allen explains that...

"The next issue of this here fanzine won't be seen for quite a while, probably at Xmas or even later. WHY? For the simple reason that in a couple of months I've got to go and play soldiers for a couple of years."

Ah, conscription - a thing of myth to Britons under forty. (I wonder how I would have coped with it?)

The most enjoyable zines in the pile though, were the issues of STARLING from the late sixties and early seventies. I was not totally unfamiliar with STARLING before, but this was the first time I'd read a selection of issues cover-to-cover...and I was impressed. The material in STARLING covered all aspects of what might be termed 'popular culture' and did so in a literate and highly entertaining manner. As someone coming to this material ten years after it was written, and with no pre-conceived notions about it, I can confidently say that it has passed the true test of worth, the test of time. Which is not to say that it doesn't show its age since contemporary references root it firmly in its era. Reading Hank Luttrell enthusing over an American rock artist who had made it big in Britain but had yet to break in his own country made me quite wistful. Ah, to have got into Jimi Hendrix in those days rather than some years after his death! And the reaction of one letter-writer to the newly released SGT.PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND was amusing:

"By hastily departing every time someone was going to play this album, I managed to avoid hearing it except for once when I was bound and gagged and sat on by a Beatle fanatic. The one time was sufficient, and I don't think I'll ever be the same. My mind, that dwells on happy and cheerful things rather than horrors, has managed to dispell most of the recollections except for the general impression of the cries of rutting cats and of more pointless racket than a freeway interchange."...Redd Boggs.

Oddly enough, it was only a few days before acquiring these zines that I put Ted White's stuff about Chester Anderson and the Communication Company on stencil...and in the earliest of the STARLINGs is the third in a series of three articles by Greg Shaw, a fan who knew him, reminiscing about Anderson, and this particular episode concentrated on the Communication Company. Odder still was receiving, the very next day, the following letter from Dan Steffan:

"The split between fandoms in the 70s was unfortunate, and I'm certainly unhappy that I missed a lot of the fanzines that came out of the UK during that time. And while I basically agree with the standard Brit line about all American zines being crap in the seventies, it isn't totally true. There have always been good American zines that would have met British criteria for quality. At least, I always thought so at the time I was reading them. The Glycer quote mentions AWRY, which was an interesting mix of all sorts of fan-writing and strange humour - I don't remember it being a zine full of 'fascinating human insights', but rather a zine that had writing about people and their thoughts - a kind of old-fashioned fannish zine. Others, like the Katz's genzine version of FOCAL POINT, and especially Joyce KATZ's POTLATCH, and Bill Kunkel's RATS!, are also underrated. Let's see, Frank Lunney's later issues of BEABOHEMA (and later his SYNDROME) were always interesting and entertaining fanzines, and Chris Couch's CIPHER, and the Luttrell's STARLING was a great mix of fannish-sercon writing that covered all sorts of topics while still being interested in books and writers. I could go on and on."

I don't think there is a "...standard Brit line about all American zines being crap in the 70s..." and I'm sure that's not what I was saying last issue either. What I said was that "back in the seventies...I found all but a very few of the fanzines that came my way from the USA to be fairly dull, the most notable exception being Terry Hughes' MOTA". I went on to say, "thus US fanzines of the seventies, or rather those that made it over here, established an image in my mind that remained largely unchanged until I began receiving PONG in mid-1981". Again..."those that made it over here" since there was, as you point out, something of a "...gap between US and UK fandoms". As I didn't enter fandom 'til 1975 I was naturally referring mainly to the zines of the late seventies, and certainly those few US zines I acquired from the early seventies seemed markedly superior to those from the latter half of that decade. This view is mirrored in UK zines of the period, those from the early seventies speaking more highly of US zines than those from the late seventies, which seems to have been more a reflection on the falling quality of the zines than the result of any fundamental change in British attitudes towards US fandom. Ted White, commenting in PONG 25 that "...in the US there have been no sudden disasters, just a decade-long withering away which has left us about where British fandom was at the end of the sixties..." seems to agree with this notion of a gradual decline.

These things come in cycles and at the moment US fanzine fandom seems to be on an upward curve whereas UK fanzine fandom, while it has reached the end of the downward curve that began after SEACON, is showing at best sporadic signs of an upward movement. There is good stuff being produced over here but not enough of it and there's no sense of cohesion, no sense of being in any way part of a larger whole (though there was, briefly, during the 'false dawn' of late-1981), and thus no appreciable generation of the tone and atmosphere that marks a distinct period and usually leads to a general raising of standards. It seems, to this observer at least, that this is now occurring in US fandom. Taral seems to feel that "...it has a curious claustrophobic feel to it..." by which he means that it's forming around a fairly small group of fans (possibly centred about a Washington axis, as suggested earlier in reply to Bill Brieding), but far from seeing this as in any way a bad thing I think it's essential for survival. If you tried to expand to take in everyone, particularly in a country as large as America, the whole thing would start to lose coherence and fade into the muzak of background activity produced by all those other groupings. While we're still small enough in the UK not to have to make any strong distinctions this point has long been passed in the US. As fanzine fans interested in your own history and concerned with your future you are special, you are unique, and you should be as elitist in outlook as you need to be to maintain a distinct identity. To this end I have to admit to finding it difficult to understand why any fannish fanzine needs a print-run of more than about two hundred copies. Are there actually more people you really want to send your zine to?

Hmmm, got a bit carried away there. In fact since mentioning the stuff I found in Greg's discard pile I've drifted away from the original purpose of this section. Be that as it may, after I'd taken all the old fanzines I wanted quite a large pile of multi-coloured paper remained. I'd taken all those items that either looked interesting or I knew of by reputation, as well as one or two

things Greg felt I would find of interest, so most of what remained ranged from the mediocre to the bad. Looking at that pile of old zines and thinking of all the effort that had gone into them over a period of three decades I felt a profound sense of depression. I had taken what I considered to be the items of worth so what remained was, by my lights, mere ephemera that had survived long past its rightful time, crud from the past. Still, if you allow your thoughts to take you too far down that path you would never do a fanzine and who's to say that thirty years hence some fan of the day will not have rummaged through the discard pile of a friend, a long-time fan who entered fandom during that golden age of the late 90s, and be thinking the same thoughts of a similar pile containing issues of a forgotten fanzine called EPSILON?

As we contemplated the remaining zines Greg wondered what he was going to do with them.

"You can't just throw them away." I said.

"No" he agreed. (Both of us accept Willis's dictum that old fanzines should always be passed on to other fans since the sum-total of what fanzine fandom has produced to date exists only in a couple of hundred such piles scattered around the world.)

"Take them to the next convention and give them away" I suggested.

"There are too many; I'd need a truck, fer fuck's sake."

"What we need is some sort of central clearing house which would accept old collections and re-distribute the fanzines to interested fans."

"Perhaps...."

"Yeah...a sort of a..a..fannish foundation!"

IT'S JUST NOT CRICKET, OLD BOY.

In the second issue of glossy sci-fi prozine INTERZONE is a story in which aliens visit Earth to watch a cricket match. Somewhat puzzled by this I questioned aging boy-wonder Malcolm Edwards (a member of the INTERZONE editorial collective and thus one of the people responsible for including the story), about just why he had chosen it when he called around to duplicate TAPPEN 4.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because it's the first story I've ever read where aliens had a sensible reason for wanting to visit Earth" he replied.

"Yeah", I thought, "cures for insomnia are not as easy to come by as we might wish."

EPSILON SUPPORTS AVEDON CAROL FOR TAFF IN '83...and expects you to.

However, if you want to vote for someone else other candidates include Larry Carmody, co-editor (with Stu Shiffman) of the excellent RAFFLES; long-time Canadian fanartist Taral Wayne MacDonald; even longer-time American fanartist Grant Canfield. Taral has copies of John Berry's GALAH PERFORMANCE (an Australian trip-report) for sale at \$2 plus postage (50¢ US, \$1 UK), with profits going to TAFF. Ah well, another issue almost done...see you in the funny pages.....?

TRUFAN & JUNIOR

7/82.

STORY & ART: ROB HANSEN

HHMPH!!
I DON'T LIKE
THE SOUND
OF THIS!

ATTENTION ALL WOMEN!
**WOMEN
IN FANDOM**
...A DISCUSSION.
2-30pm IN CON HALL
**WOMEN
ONLY**

WHY NOT?

BECAUSE IT BARS MEN IN GENERAL AND ME
IN PARTICULAR. WHAT ARE THEY PLOTTING? A
WOMEN-ONLY APA? AN ALL-FEMALE CONVENTION
BIDDING COMMITTEE? I GET TWITCHY WHEN
THINGS ARE GOING ON IN FANDOM
I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT. WE
HAVE TO FIND OUT WHAT
THEY'RE UP TO.

WE?

YEAH, WE. THE FUTURE OF FANDOM AS WE KNOW IT
COULD BE AT STAKE! ONE OF US HAS TO INFILTRATE
THAT MEETING IN DRAG!

YOU'LL NEVER
PULL IT OFF.

NOT ME, JUNIOR,
YOU!!

I MEAN, I'D HAVE TO SHAVE
OFF MY BEARD AND WHILE NO-
ONE IS MORE DEVOTED TO FANDOM
I'VE STILL GOT A MACHO IMAGE
TO MAINTAIN.

WHAT MACHO IMAGE?

DON'T GET
CUTE, KID.

SHORTLY, IN THEIR HOTEL ROOM....

WHERE DID YOU
GET ALL THIS STUFF?

CONTACTS, JUNIOR,
CONTACTS. ANYWAY,
THE THING IS YOU
LOOK PRETTY GOOD...

...IN FACT, WHAT ARE
YOU DOING AFTER
THE MEETING?

HO HO HO.



NOW, REMEMBER TO TURN ON THE RECORDER HIDDEN IN YER FAKE TITS WHEN YOU GET IN.

I WON'T FORGET, I... HEY..... ISN'T THAT BERTRAM B. BONG?

...OF COURSE I'M VERY SENSITIVE, BABE WHY THE LEAD CHARACTER IN MY LAST NOVEL WAS A FEMALE BLACK ECO-FREAK PACIFIST. HOW MUCH MORE SENSITIVE TO TODAY'S ISSUES CAN YOU BE?

NOW HOW'S ABOUT COMIN' BACK TO MY ROOM....?



WHAAM



JEEZ, THAT WAS ONE WEIRD CHICK! IMAGINE NOT WANTIN' TO BE LAID BY YOUR FAVOURITE SF WRITER! HMM....WONDER IF SHE'S A DYKE?

JUNIOR...? JUNIOR!!!

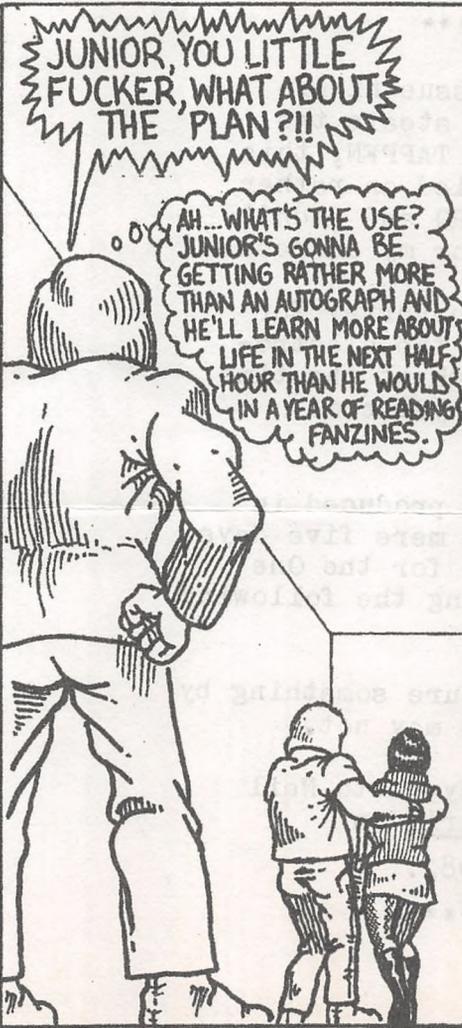
DAMN!! I'D FORGOTTEN THAT NEOS ARE IMPRESSED BY BIG NAME SF WRITERS.



YOU'RE MY FAVOURITE AUTHOR, MR. BONG.

WELL, WELL, WELL, WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

WORLD-FAMOUS SF WRITER, BERTRAM B. BONG AT YOUR SERVICE, BABY. MY FRIENDS CALL ME THREEBIE....



JUNIOR, YOU LITTLE FUCKER, WHAT ABOUT THE PLAN?!!

AH...WHAT'S THE USE? JUNIOR'S GONNA BE GETTING RATHER MORE THAN AN AUTOGRAPH AND HE'LL LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFE IN THE NEXT HALF-HOUR THAN HE WOULD IN A YEAR OF READING FANZINES.



I'M SURE IT'LL DO HIM GOOD AND EVEN IF IT DOESN'T, IT KEEPS HIM OUT OF MY HAIR FOR A WHILE.

NOW, THE REALLY IMPORTANT QUESTION IS...

...WHEN DOES THE BAR OPEN?

FIN...

This is EPSILON 12, brought to
you by Rob Hansen
9A Greenleaf Rd.
East Ham
London E6 1DX
UK.

CONTENTS

can be discovered by you opening
the fanzine and looking through
the pages, a process which will
keep you far more alert than
would a pre-packed listing such
as is usually found under a
heading such as this. Go to it.

Cover by Harry Bell & Rob Hansen.

Once again, as in issue nine,
EPSILON shamelessly steals the
back page layout of TAPPEN, this
time because I rambled on rather
too long in the INTRO and didn't
leave enough room for my address.

Usual thanks to John Harvey for
sterling service on the electro-
stencil front (though at the time
of typing he hasn't yet come
through with them).

This issue is being produced in
time for SILICON (a mere five days
away. Hooray!), and for the One
Tun September meeting the following
week.

Next issue may feature something by
Leroy Kettle, or it may not.

This last stencil typed to Neil
Young's 'Cinnamon Girl' on

21st August 1982.
