

A N V I L 6



IN SPACE YOU CAN STILL GET HYSTERICAL.

Fire and Water Fire and Water Fire and Water Fire and Water Fire

In the last issue of Anvil, I put forth the ultimatum/proposition that if someone from the club did not take over the editorship, I would switch it to bi-monthly. And since no one was forthcoming, the deed is done. In a way, I'm glad. I've gradually built up enthusiasm for this little zine. By waiting two months between nos. 4 and 5, I finally had enough material to make twelve pages without straining. Twelve to fourteen pages strikes me as just the right length for the bi-monthly zine of a club the size of Birmingham.

My good friend, Cliff Biggers, has remarked that he felt I really didn't want to run Anvil as another news and chatter clubzine a la Atarantes, the ASFIC zine he edits. I think he's right. I suppose I've secretly wanted to edit a regular genzine for some time now, but I have never had the energy to do it. So it follows that since I have to edit Anvil anyway, I can kill two birds with one zine.

The only problem is that Anvil is not my zine but, rather, the club's, and I may be the only member who wants a bi-monthly genzine instead of a monthly newsletter. (If this doesn't get me Anvil's first loc from a clubmember then I don't know what will.)

In issue 5 I ran two short news items, about half a page, and the rest articles, reviews, club minutes, and locs. And it got the best response to date. This issue will have no news, unless Louisville, KY should suddenly be eliminated by mysterious death rays from outer space. Also beginning with this issue, I've tried to upgrade the overall layout and appearance a little. Subsequent issues will see continued, albeit minor, experimentation along this line. Here is where I make my pitch. I need art. If you do it or have a firend draws, mundane or otherwise, please send something in an SF or fantasy vein to Anvil. Your work will be taken care and returned.

And with this issue, we add "Merlin" Odom, a BSFC member, to our list of contributors. He has sent in a hefty amount of poetry and a Battlestar Galactica article. We also have a well-written introduction to John Varley as a second contribution by Beth Pointer. Together they prove my supposition that we've got the talent in Birmingham to do a zine that's first class. Let's keep plugging.

In the next issue, I promise to get away from these continuous editorials on the asperations and shortcomings of Anvil. Maybe we will get to something really important such as the propriety of offering Pepsi to a neo.

ANVIL 6 is the May-June issue of the Birmingham Science Fiction Club, edited by Wade Gilbreath, 4206 Balboa Av, Pinson, AL 35126. It's available for membership, trade with other fanzines or clubzines, locs or subscriptions at 6 for \$2.00.

Remembrance

I wish you greenspaces,
Cyanpeace, allheal's touch
Wildreaches' windquiet,
Pass Persephone's icy realm

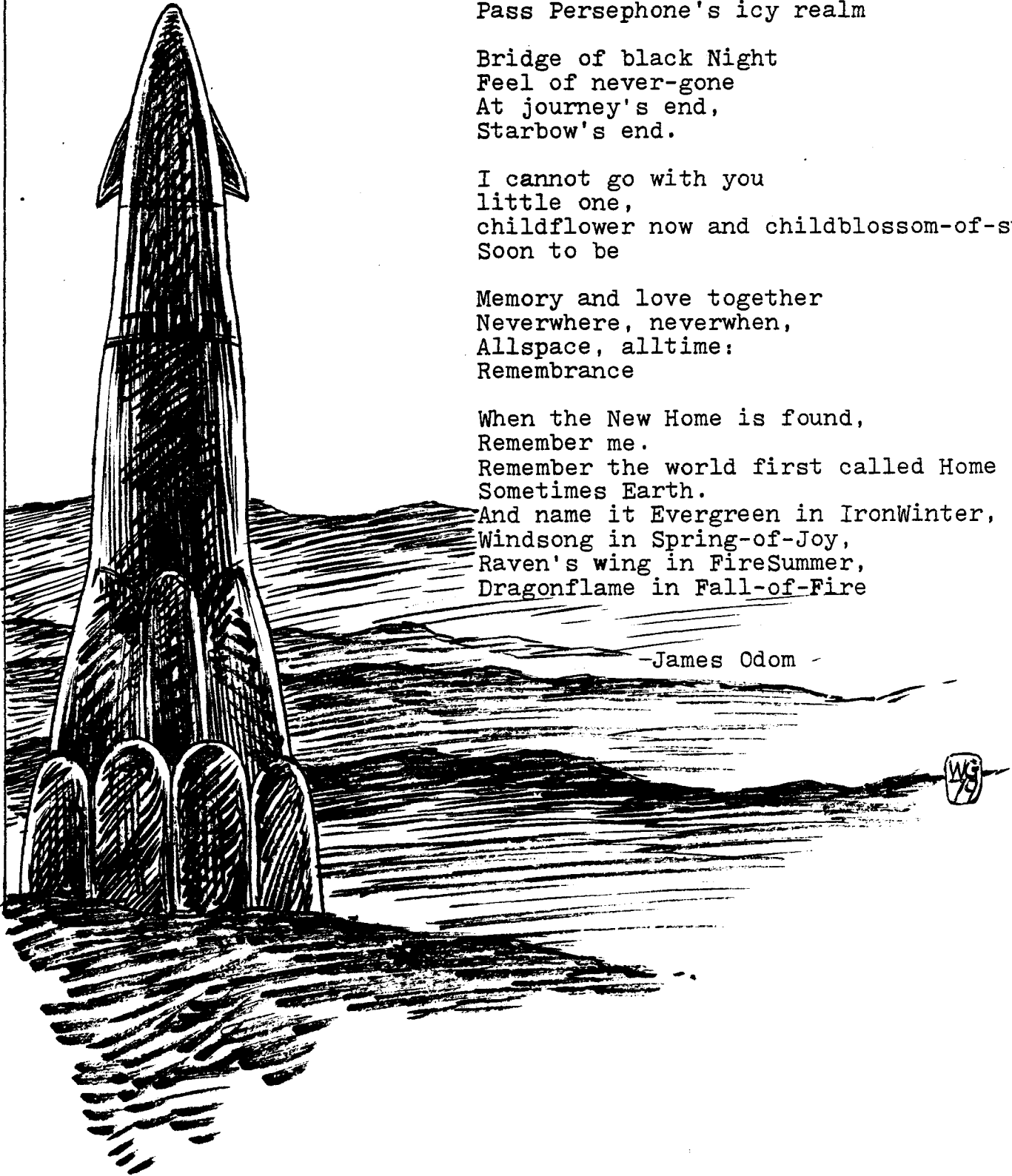
Bridge of black Night
Feel of never-gone
At journey's end,
Starbow's end.

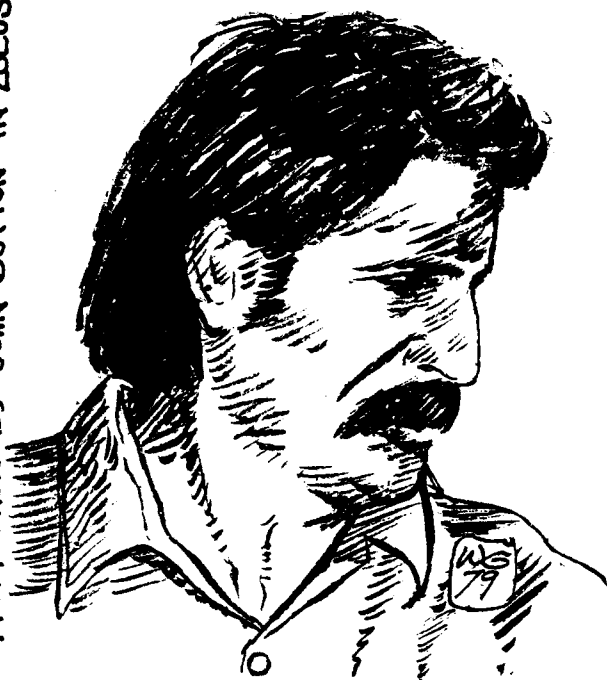
I cannot go with you
little one,
childflower now and childblossom-of-stars
Soon to be

Memory and love together
Neverwhere, neverwhen,
Allspace, alltime:
Remembrance

When the New Home is found,
Remember me.
Remember the world first called Home
Sometimes Earth.
And name it Evergreen in IronWinter,
Windsong in Spring-of-Joy,
Raven's wing in FireSummer,
Dragonflame in Fall-of-Fire

-James Odom-





JOHN VARLEY

FEELING GOOD WITH JV

An Introduction to John Varley

By Beth Pointer

To those of you not already familiar with John Varley's work, I hope this article will be an inducement to discover him. There are a few things you need to know about his universe in order to feel comfortable with him there.

1. Millennia ago, the Earth was subject to an invasion by giant gas-type creatures on their way to Jupiter (they didn't actually attack: they merely caused anything mechanical to cease to work, thereby effectively ending civilization as we know it). 2. Human colonies on the Moon, Mars, Venus, Pluto Mercury and in the rings of Saturn carry on what human civilization there is. 3. There is the "Ophiuchi (off-e-yoo'-ki) Hotline" somewhere out there transmitting certain extremely important pieces of data along with what is apparently garbage to humans. Humans occupy stations in space to receive and re-transmit the signals. 4. Black holes (small ones, of course) are used to provide power. An enthusiastic, if foolhardy, group of people called "hole hunters" try to find new holes. 5. Finally, in human society, certain things are considered normal: a. cloning, b. sex changes, c. enormously creative human-symb pairs from the rings of Saturn, d. direct interfacing of the human brain with computers, making memory transplants common, e. the use of substitutes for certain human organs such as eyes to see on Venus and a mechanical lung which makes pressure suits unnecessary.

Now that we're through with the nuts and bolts, the most obvious point that comes to me about Varley's writing is that I enjoy

it. In the introduction to Persistence of Vision, Algis Budrys states, "One thing about these stories is that they will probably leave you feeling good. The people in them solve their problems, grievous though they are, and they are meanwhile actively engaged with solving them, and with life itself." Once you get past the novelty of the hardware and social customs, the people are still human. You will identify with them and understand the conflicts they face because they are similar to your own conflicts, also.

So far, Varley has published three books and several stories. The books are more readily accessible, so that is what we're looking at in this article.

His first novel was The Ophiuchi Hotline. The critics either loved it, or hated it. It has a "kid in a candy store" feeling about it because he had just dreamed up this fantastically complex universe, and he is playing around with it. He made the book more complicated than he needed to, but I still enjoyed it. If you can visualize traveling along a cone from base to the apex, that was my reaction to the book. It holds together at the end, but in a much less emphatic manner than at the beginning of the book.

The Persistence of Vision is a collection of short fiction published from 1974 to 1978. I have a weakness for short fiction and the entire book was a delight. In his two novels, he tends to let things get out of hand, but under the constraints of short fiction, he is concise. The title story is extremely good. Varley has the actor's ability to put himself in the place of people whose life is completely foreign to him and make his presentation believable.

Titan does not take place in his "universe" as far as I can tell. Remember the cone I described for Hotline? Turn it around and travel from the apex to the base and that's the reaction I had to Titan. I started the book thinking I had it all figured out, but was I ever wrong. Again, he has a lot going on, but this time the convolutions of the plot are more cohesive. I'm not sure it is a "good" book in terms of literary criticism. I distrust my critical judgement when I am reading something which turns out to be such a lark. (Note: If you are not singing "Follow the Yellow Brick Road" by the end of the book, you've really missed something.)

Finally, in Universe 9, edited by Terry Carr, there is a story called "Options". How Varley can write about a female character and make her believable is incredible (Hotline and Titan also have female protagonists). He is attempting to redefine our ideas of sexuality in a similar manner to The Left Hand of Darkness, but his treatment of androgyny makes more sense to me. The fact that Le Guin's protagonist is "male" could have some bearing on

my predisposition toward Varley's story.

According to an index called the Cumulative Books Index for May 1979, a book called In the Hall of the Martian Kings will be published soon. You can be sure that I'll be getting it. Shall I get you a copy too?

BGB*

by James "Merlin" Odom

First, ever remember that every critic writes what amounts to his own personal opinion of whatever he reviewing. So, you have fair warning before you decide to commit yourself and read this. What? Still here? Well, sit back, lay back and get your spleen ready to vent then.

Now, as for Battlestar Galactica, I have a thing or three to say. There have been quite a few potshots (which in my opinion would be restricted to talking about taking marijuana intravenously) taken at BG. It has been compared to Star Trek (unfavorably), Star Wars (plagiaristically), and been attacked on grounds of technology, terminology, plot, and characterization (or lack thereof).

So now the defender of the faith takes on the infidel hordes, To wit. Star Trek was concerned with a completely different situation, which was "...to go where no man has gone before, seeking new life and civilizations...". Or something like that. There were different characters, including one with pointy ears and green blood. The technology was different. Almost everything was different.

"Star date", "warp", and other invented terminology for ST did not become clear until quite a few episodes after they were introduced. To this very day I have yet to hear a good explanation for "star date". How fast is a warp? The episode wherein we are told that Warp 6 is 216 times the speed of light, but that's the only time we are told what any warp means. It took some nameless person to figure out that any given warp number should be cubed (ex. $6 \times 6 \times 6 = 216$) to give the multiple speed of light.

The purpose of the show, or rather the premise, was in the case of ST a glorified Captain Cook with ambassadorial powers, and the unwritten permission to completely rework any civilization that didn't quite measure up to Capt. Kirk's standards. Oh sure, to be fair, sometimes he was just cleaning up after somebody else's act of desecration, but still...it seemed to happen with disconcerting

*Battlestar Galactica Blues



frequency. There was also very little connection among the shows. Virtually any one of them could be taken out of order and be enjoyed just as much as if they were seen in order.

And the technology! A civilization that can teleport, has a FTL drive, artificial gravity, etc., and can't even handle one former Starship Captain in a wheelchair? Or other bio-medical problems? Again, some criticism has arisen in regard to the fact that BG has no advanced technology (read teleporter). That is just saying that simply because you don't have a magical wish-machine ("Boy, I wish I were back on the Enterprise," and lo and behold...) as a passive transport device to get around the problems of a dynamic system of transportation (Viper and Shuttle), the show is automatically inferior, or in some other bit of technology. I'll say one thing, and that is that BG's technology at least looks to present-day audiences more like highly sophisticated computer hardware and what-not than ST.

Which brings me to my last point about ST. BG has been accused of having sterile characterization, acting-wise. The only reason that is said is because BG does not have a token alien, be it Vulcan, Klingon, or whatever. Take away Spock, and you then have to make do with humans. And when you take away Spock, you take away what, in retrospect, made ST unique--the Kirk-Spock relationship.

Now, Star Trek was a very good show. It had two shows that won Hugos. It covered many subjects, some quite daring for the Sixties. It had variety. But still, take away the Kirk-Spock-Bones relationship and it comes close to any other SF-oriented show. But in all fairness, even the "bad" shows were quite an improvement over the standard fare we had to but up with before. But what this has to do with BG is that the theme is not the same, thus dictating different directions the plot has to take. In fact, BG is sort of what ST would have been like had not the Organinas meddled like recluses with delusions of godhood. Anyway, take a few plot elements. One dealt with a stranded, amnesiac, pistol-toting Cylon. Well, why not? Shades of "Specter of the Gun"! If I had lost my memory and had to

adapt to an alien culture, I probably would have been in much the same situation. In another culture, he would have been a spear-chukker. In a manner of speaking, perhaps that was one problem, especially with the first season: it dealt too much with "How are we going to avoid the Cylons' sneaky trap this time?" However, I believe we can see some improvements in the second season. We find more use of intrafleet scenes, interpersonal relationships, and clarification of certain technological terms and concepts. We saw less of the Cylons, though they were always in the wings, waiting and watching. We saw more titillation as to the search for Earth (the way things were going in the last episode, they may get here any time now), and even a few para-supernatural beings, who I felt were more convincing than the Organians. At least the Unknowns (my private word for them) were more humane, sympathetic, and believable, at least were less meddlesome, ultimately.

In conclusion, let me just say that however you may have felt about Battlestar Galactica, at least we could have supported it until either something better came along or it improved (with our help, of course, and suggestions--such as getting SF writers to help, either in writing scripts or consulting functions or at least something.) Oh, one more thing. About Commander Adama: The reason he talks like a character of the Bible (our equivalent of their Book of the Word) is, well, take a good look at him.

club notes club notes club notes club notes club notes club notes

By David Wood, Secretary/Treasurer

The June meeting got off to a rather inauspicious beginning since both the President and Secretary/Treasurer were late. Undaunted, the members waited patiently for someone to begin the meeting, and finally, they were rewarded for their perseverance. The main topic of discussion at the meeting was, of course, the convention in November. Penny Frierson called upon her past experience to offer suggestions for how to make the convention a success without turning the club members into mortal enemies. I hope Penny can be persuaded to have her ideas printed in a future issue of Anvil because I believe everyone could benefit from them.

The general consensus of opinion seemed to be that the con should be a sort of "do it yourself" tupe with the guests providing their own entertainment. A filksinging room, war games room and a trivia quizz were all mentioned as possible ideas for group participation.

The meeting adjourned for refreshments, and, as I moved from group to group, I heard other ideas for programming concerning the local chapter of MENSA, the local Society for Creative Anachronism, and computer club. However, since all of the members left after the refreshments, there was no one left for the business phase of the meeting afterward. Be sure to read the next issue of Anvil for the exciting conclusion of "what are we going to do at the convention?"

dhj
508 B. W. 11th St.
Rome, Ga. 30161

Dear Anvil:

I hope your group agrees on the bi-monthly basis for Anvil, because this helps me to keep things more up to date with locs. I'll also agree that it makes for a more solid zine, though you should watch out for dated material. On a bi-monthly basis, that shouldn't be too much of a problem.

You can count on my clan for Halfacon. We'll be huckstering, of course. Recently, I've bought into some rather large local collections, so I'm actually accumulating more sf than I have room for! Oh, Happy Day! I also can't resist praising you on your timing. November 11 is my 27th birthday, so I have a double excuse to make whoopee at the con. I have so many fond memories of the DSC there that I have some healthy expectations. I need some, after the horror of Kubla Khan two weekends ago. But that's a story for ATARANTES.//Speaking of Nashville khans, it looks like the Moore's bid will be the only one for 1980. So far.

Must salute David Wood for the style of his minutes. It's so much more interesting than the bland, straightforward "we did this" we did that" approach, and gives a good flavor of the meeting. I won't make my eternal promise of getting to a meeting, as people poo-pah and throw aspersions at me (similar to casting aspersions) for making promises I can't keep. But I WILL KEEP it.//I'm awaiting some sort of word on the Fan Art Calendar, but it seems like it's one of those projects everyone thinks is a good idea but no one is willing to help with. In Cliff's opinion, that's the story of running a club.//I still pledge a heap of Harlequins for you'all to flea market for moolah. At a quarter a shot, you can't keep 'em away. Best to let the mundanes pay for a bit of fannish fun, anyway.//Jim's report on Stellarcon reminds me of the upcoming Tennecon at UT in Knoxville. I hadn't heard anything about it until my own, dear mother brought up the subject, assuming I knew all about it with my fannish connections. I hope it meets with as much success as the Stellarcon. At last! Something going on in Knoxville, the Fannish Void of the South!

The interesting thing about the contrasting views of the Superman flick were that they weren't contrasting. As I've observed before, just about everyone seems to feel the film has similar good points and bad points, and I've yet to read a review where the author wasn't delighted by the film. So was I.//I was quite, quite pleased that you would print my loc complete with illustration. Actually, the droid looks a bit female. Sometimes I wonder about these doodles of mine.//I see Cliff's already "effecting" his new address. By now, he and Susan are riotously ensconced in there new home, throwing stormy hither and thither by her tail. Heavy Sigh* Peagreen with envy.//Lest I forget, the cover was the best one yet. The masthead has the strangest expression on her face. And how I love that Zerocks.

Much love,

tucked away deb

May 29, 1979



((Deb, I know I've told you this in person, but I want to put it in print. Your long, substantial locs on each issue are a tremendous plus that offset the negative aspects of doing ANVIL. The negative aspects include correcting four hundred typos each issue and realizing that I've only got five pages of material instead of the needed six. Please, keep those letters coming in.))

Lee Pelton 1204 Harmon Place #10 Mpls, MN 55403

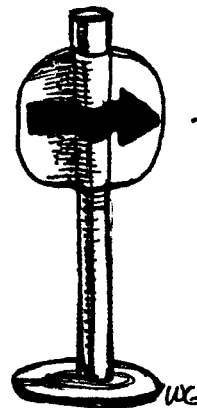
Just got ANVIL 5 and thought I'd dash off a few lines in response.

Sad to here about Janet Reinhardt. Liz Schwarzin called us here in Mpls. after getting the news from Guy Lillian III. We told transplanted Southern Fried Fan Ira Thornhill the news, and even though we didn't know her, or Hank, the idea of a fan dieing sounds so very strange. It always happens to others, right?

Jim Gilpatrick does nice, ~~the~~^{to}-the-point conreps. If I were you, I'd advise you to give him a regular column, if he's willing.

I missed the statement you apparently made about yearning to do a RUNE/ATARANTES-type clubzine. Bob Soderberg and Cliff Biggers make the best points. Going bi-monthly, or even quarterly with a few 2-page fillers to club members will give you a better chance of succeeding if this is your goal. And don't limit yourself to having all your material coming from club members. Maybe 65-75%, but solicit from other fen, proven fanzine people or people you have faith in as far as their writing skills go to give you something, specified or otherwise. I have found that sometimes brashness accomplishes wonders when you are a faned. Being humble helps, too. But dig for results, and then one day you will run off an ANVIL that you will look at and say, "Now this is a good fanzine!" and you will deep down inside feel this to be true. Feels great, let me tell you.

((Your advice on editing is well taken. I believe I will try to hit some outside sources for material. I guess my problem has been that I felt the club would have^{to} carry the load, because a small circulation, "no name" clubzine would have trouble soliciting outside material. But, as you point out, that is not the way to approach this editing business.))



IT'S NICE TO
- HAVE A DI-
RECTION IN
LIFE.

ART CREDITS: All art by the editor, except the Dalzell/Taral illo on DHJ's stationary, page 9. Cover dedicated to David Birdsong.

423 Summit Avenue,
Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740.
May 18, 1979.

Wade Gilbreath,
4206 Balboa Ave.,
Pinson, Alabama, 35126.

Dear Wade:

Many thanks for the fifth issue of Anvil. It's considerably more legible and much more interesting than the average clubzine of not too many years ago. Apparently every genre of fanzines is sharing in the improvements of recent years.

You seem to be enjoying a halcyon period in the club's history, to judge by the meeting notes. I hope this apparent lack of feuding and fussing survives for the next decade or two. One of the ~~most~~ nicest things about your Birmingham group, from my selfish standpoint, is the fact that I recognize the names of quite a few members. It's awfully discouraging to get a clubzine, find every name mentioned in it a new one to me, and begin to wonder if I'm just a neofan who hasn't gotten acquainted with fandom yet.

Stellarcon III interested me because it seems to have accidentally taken on some of the characteristics that I'd like more cons to adopt. I've felt unhappy for a long while about the commercialism that is growing constantly more apparent at the average con. I don't expect many other fans to share my belief that such things as huckstering and art exhibits should be confined to hotel or motel rooms instead of possessing a special area. But circumstances seem to have eliminated the huckster room in Greensboro and I gather from Jim Gilpatrick's report that everyone enjoyed it anyway.

I read the Superman reviews with interest for a couple of reasons. They provide me with some morsels of information about the film which I hadn't seen in other reviews. And just last Sunday, I heard for the first time the first two episodes of the Superman radio serial (and taped them) so it was a good opportunity to compare how the radio script writers introduced Superman with the start of the new film. Since I'm chronically behind the times, I'd estimate that some time within the next year or two I should read some Superman comic books for the first time, then watch episodes of the television series in the mid-1980's, and if I live long enough, maybe I'll celebrate New Century's Eve at the end of 1999 or 2000 depending on how the new century is reckoned by going to see this feature film at a movie festival on Space Station 48-A.

Your reproduction is perfect for antiquated eyeballs like mine. The artwork is fine, particularly the striking front cover. Thanks very much for letting me see this issue, and reserve a place for me on the BSFC roster in about three or four years if the increasing price of fuel oil eventually makes life impractical Up North in Hagerstown.

Yrs., &c.,



Harry Warner, Jr.

((It must be something in the air here (besides the polutinn) that the keeps the fan-types on such good terms. We haven't had a bad argument or fued in the ieght months since the club started, and back in '77 when Penny Frierson, Frank Love and I co-chaired the DSC, we got all the way through the con with friendships intact though our nerves were shot. Some people might say we're dull, but everyone seems to enjoy the camaraderie and that's what counts.///I'll reserve you a place on the Birmingham roster, if you'll promise to save me a place at the movie festival on Space Station 48-A. Deal?))

Cliff Biggers 6045 Summit Wood Dr Kennesaw GA 30144

...From what I heard, the main reason Marlon Brando was cast in SUPERMAN was because, up until the time of his casting as Jor-el, no one was taking the idea of another version of SUPERMAN seriously, and the directors and casting personal had trouble getting serious stars to take roles in the film. By hiring Puso to script and Brando to play Jor-el, the message was "this is a serious version of the Superman mythos", and they were able to get the attention they needed. So, indirectly, Frank Love's theory of publicity reasons for Brando's outrageous sum was right.

That's probably why I was just a bit disappointed with the film, also; after working so hard to get us to take it seriously, Hackman's Lex Luthor was almost camped up. That was the real stricking difference in the first half of the film (up until Superman makes this twelve-year retreat) and the second half.

Frank Love's news about a Boeing 707 having 4 engines and any three of them being sufficient to keep the plane airborne is strikingly poignant after last month's DC10 crash...

((Thanks for the information on SUPERMAN, I'm sure I can get Frank to comment on the DC10 question by next issue. Since he works for Hayes Aircraft, he may have some inside information.))

ANVIL
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Pinson AL 35126



first class
do not delay

MIKE GLYER
14974 OSCEOLA ST
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