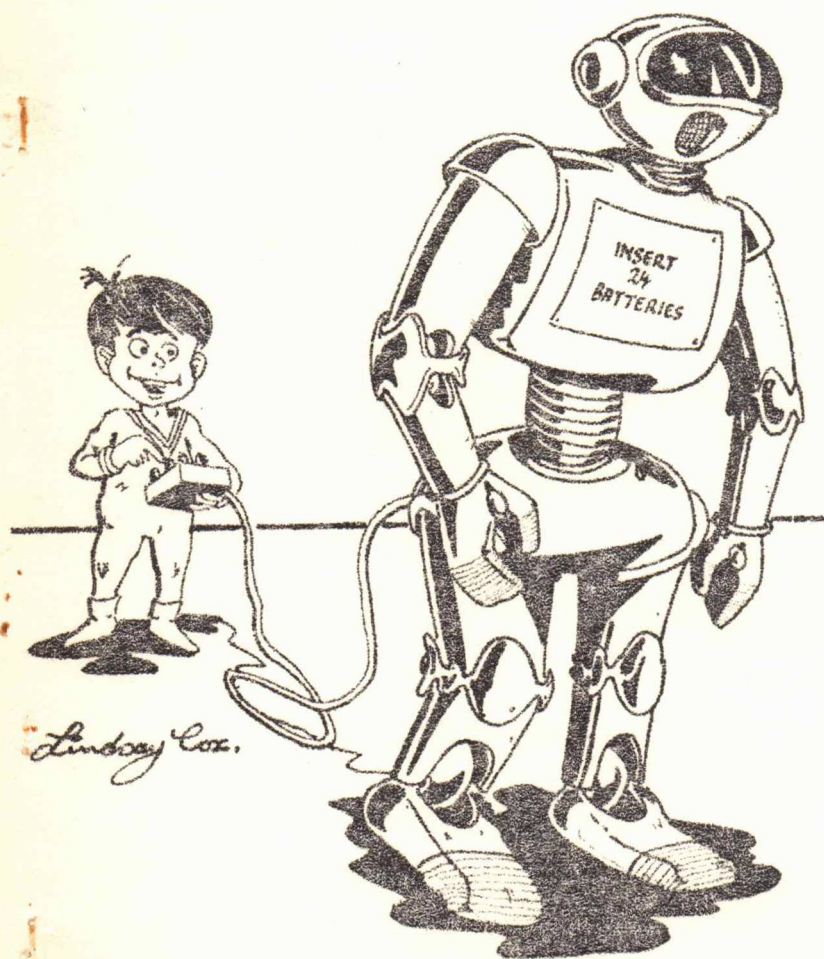


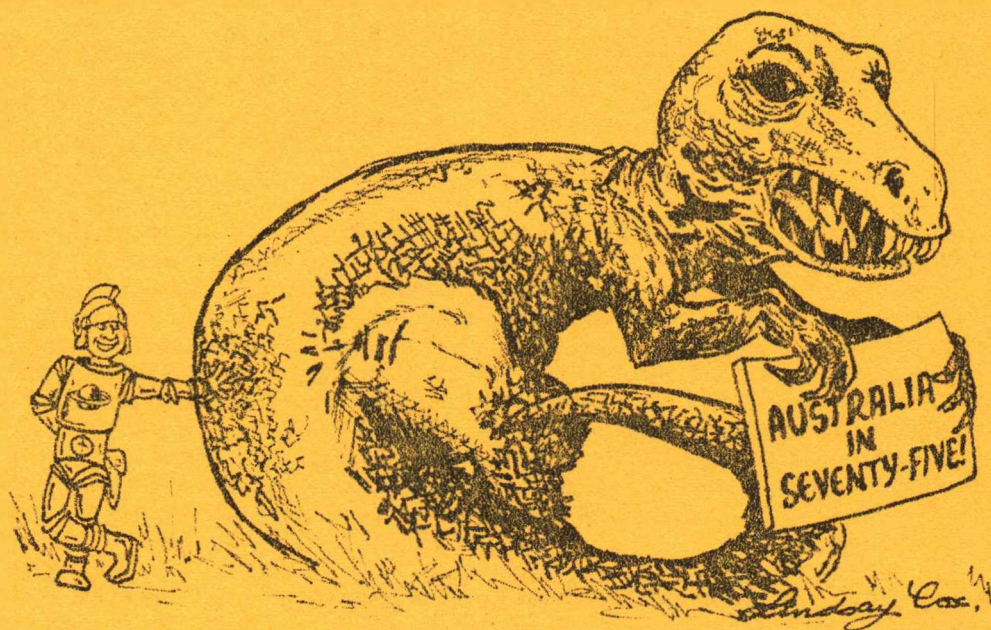
This isn't

SF COMMENTARY 26



IN THIS ISSUE...

I. Asimov
R. Heinlein
T. Sturgeon
A.C. Clarke
Y. Yevtushenko
J.L. Borges
L. Durrell
M. Proust
A. Pushkin
L. Edmonds
are mentioned



THIS ISN'T SF COMMENTARY 26 is really SCYTHROP 26 in a clever plastic disguise. (You were really fooled for a moment, weren't you - go on, admit it.) The date is Autumn 1972, and this is our extra special once-in-a-lifetime LET'S HEAR IT FOR BRUCE GILLESPIE! issue. In it we find:

I MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS ... wherein the editor fails miserably to reproduce Bruce's inimitable style, and there are letters from Jerry Lapidus, Joanne Burger, Jack Wodhams, George Turner and John D. Berry. Jack and George tell outlandish Keats & Chapman anecdotes. 3

This section is preceded by a selection from the works of Thomas Love Peacock, for those who prefer a better class of reading.

PLUMBERS OF THE COSMOS ... wherein George Turner looks at Bruce Gillespie and his magazine. Definitely not recommended for the hero-worshipping class. 9

This is followed by some thoughts by the editor on the same subject.

MUSHROOMS IN THE BASKET ... wherein Stanislaw Lem is interviewed by some anonymous Russian, and Reveals All about his approach to writing. 15

CRITICANTO ... wherein Mervyn Barrett, Robin Johnson and Gary Deindorfer discuss in the penetrating manner you have come to expect of this publication, books, films and music. (Something for everyone in this issue, by crikey.) 19

THE ARTWORK is by Lindsay Cox.

Lettering by the editor, using Letterpress; electrostencils by Noel Kerr; paper by Gestetner; production by Roneo 865; the fanzine flies Qantas.

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THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

MULTUM IN PAVO: An anthology in instalments

In the evening, the whole party met, as usual, in the library. Marionetta sat at the harp; the Honourable Mr Listless sat by her and turned over her music, though the exertion was almost too much for him. The Reverend Mr Larynx relieved him occasionally in this delightful labour. Scythrop, tormented by the demon Jealousy, sat in the corner biting his lips and fingers. Marionetta looked at him every now and then with a smile of most provoking good humour, which he pretended not to see, and which only the more exasperated his troubled spirit. He took down a volume of Dante, and pretended to be deeply interested in the Purgatorio, though he knew not a word he was reading, as Marionetta was well aware; who, tripping across the room, peeped into his book, and said to him, "I see you are in the middle of Purgatory." — "I am in the middle of hell," said Scythrop furiously. "Are you?" said she; "then come across the room, and I will sing you the finale of Don Giovanni."

"Let me alone," said Scythrop. Marionetta looked at him with a deprecating smile, and said, "You unjust, cross creature, you." — "Let me alone," said Scythrop, but much less emphatically than at first, and by no means wishing to be taken at his word. Marionetta left him immediately, and returning to the harp, said, just loud enough for Scythrop to hear — "Did you ever read Dante, Mr Listless? Scythrop is reading Dante, and is just now in Purgatory." — "And I," said the Honourable Mr Listless, "am not reading Dante, and am just now in Paradise," bowing to Marionetta.

MARIONETTA: You are very gallant, Mr Listless; and I dare say you are very fond of reading Dante.

THE HONOURABLE MR LISTLESS: I don't know how it is, but Dante never came in my way till lately. I never had him in my collection, and if I had him I should not have read him. But I find he is growing fashionable, and I am afraid I must read him some wet morning.

MARIONETTA: No, read him some evening, by all means. Were you ever in love, Mr Listless?

THE HONOURABLE MR LISTLESS: I assure you, Miss O'Carroll, never - till I came to Nightmare Abbey. I dare say it is very pleasant; but it seems to give so much trouble that I fear the exertion would be too much for me.

MARIONETTA: Shall I teach you a compendious method of courtship, that will give you no trouble whatever?

THE HONOURABLE MR LISTLESS: You will confer on me an inexpressible obligation. I am all impatience to learn it.

MARIONETTA: Sit with your back to the lady and read Dante; only be sure to begin in the middle, and turn over three or four pages at once - backwards as well as forwards, and she will immediately perceive that you are desperately in love with her - desperately.

THE HONOURABLE MR LISTLESS: You are pleased to be facetious, Miss O'Carroll. The lady would infallibly conclude that I was the greatest brute in town.

MARIONETTA: Far from it. She would say, perhaps, some people have odd methods of showing their affection.

- From NIGHTMARE ABBEY, Chapter VI

«Editorial note: With all respect to the Presiding Spirit of this publication, the above method, alas, does not work. From bitter experience, on various occasions and in many circumstances, I have found that Dante - and Gibbon, Theocritus in the original Greek, the New Scientist, Ibsen, Asimov, SF Commentary, the Encyclopædia Britannica - even the collected novels of Peacock himself - induce no such perception in the lady at whom the recommended procedure is aimed. Perhaps Marionettas are just scarce these days.»

I Must Be Talking To My Friends ...

Imitation, they say, is the sincerest form of getting you nowhere. Something like that. Anyway, for this issue only, SCYTHROP salutes SF COMMENTARY by attempting a vaguely Gillespie-ish format, publishing something by Stanislaw Lem (when only last issue or thereabouts we said we would never ever... but that was last issue), and in even more subtle ways indicating that we think Bruce Gillespie is a good guy and SF COMMENTARY a great fanzine. Congratulations on getting onto the Hugo ballot, Bruce, and even if you don't win a yeller rocket, be assured that you have something much more valuable: friends you can talk to - friends, moreover, who are more than willing to listen whenever you put typewriter to stencil.

I should really start this thing with a letter from Bruce. I had an excellent one a few days ago, but unfortunately most of it was marked DNQ (why, I have no idea: it was just stuff about wild libidinous drunken sex orgies at the Melbourne Eastercon) and it contained no reference whatever to the last few ineffably brilliant issues of SCYTHROP. (Come to think of it, I didn't get around to publishing those.) But Bruce did say - and I quote from memory, having filed the letter in Another Place (as we call wastepaper baskets in Canberra) - that one way of stopping AUSTRALIAN SF REVIEW in its tracks was for him to submit an article to it; now, it would seem, the way to stop SF COMMENTARY in its tracks is for me to do a cover for it.

So we'll start the letter-column with... hmm, lessee now... Heinlein, Sturgeon, Clarke, Asimov... tum te tum... Yevtushenko, Borges, Durrell... jeez they write a lotta crap... Proust, Pushkin, Leigh Edmonds... Oh hell, let's start with

JERRY LAPIDUS
54 Clearview Drive
Pittsford
New York 14534 USA

Thanks muchly for Scythrop 22. I read most of it during the waits for my car to cool off, after repeated over-heatings on the way to the Worldcon in Boston, and it proved an excellent time-filler. (Why don't you get a VW, Jerry? They don't over-heat, they just seize up. Against such an eventuality I keep the complete novels of Thomas Love Peacock in the glove-box.)

This issue seems to combine the best features of ASFR with the best features of some of the lighter Australian fanzines, to produce a thoroughly enjoyable and easy-to-read publication. I hope this one lasts for a while, too; right now your only major lack is one of good artwork. Some of the work is enjoyable, but generally the illustrations are far inferior to the written material, both serious and light. It's primitively enjoyable, but really doesn't do much for me as art.

I do like a lot of your layout and design ideas, embodying some concepts we don't see over here. The Le Guin photo page, for example, strikes me as particularly interesting - and also your boxed comments concerning each section adds a fine touch, both as additional editorial matter and a visual aspect not often around. If you only had the high-quality artwork to go with it! I mention this mainly because you seem to have a much greater interest in artwork than most British and Australian fan editors, and really should be able to get better artwork. (Thanks for the compliment on layout, Jerry, but on the matter of artwork - and I know this from your own publications and from what you have written in other people's - we diverge rather sharply. Artwork, in my fanzines, usually illustrates the text. Art fillers are precisely that: fillers. Let me make it clear that I don't in the least

mind fanzines with fillerstrations on every page: I love 'em. But that's ~~not my approach~~. My fanzines are meant to be read. Any artwork I use is chosen to enhance the text, not to provide relief from it. Somewhere you have mentioned the late lamented TRUMPET. I have, or had, just about every issue, and by god that was a beautiful publication - but the only piece I can recall ever reading in TRUMPET was a stark, chilling and magnificent bit of self-revelation by Alan Dodd. Some say I am just not a visually-orientated person; I say that if words are used well the imagination is liberated to conjure up all the pictures anyone could possibly need. Decoration is fine: Terry Carr's use of Alicia Austin's frontispieces in UNIVERSE 2, for example, is admirable - and please don't think for one moment that I regard that lady's work as decoration; Alicia's work is superb; I refer only to Terry's use of it in that book. Okay, so I'm a 19th Century throwback, a pre-McLuhan hick if you like, but I can't help feeling that artists such as "Phiz" and Tenniel owe as much to the authors they illustrated for their immortality as they deserve in their own right. To conclude this much too long interpolation, I should mention that of the artists represented in Scythrop 22 only one is an amateur: me. You can say what you like about my stuff; I don't mind at all. But Liz Kinnaird, John Sandler, Gerald Carr, Greg and Grae, and Lawrence Beck are professional artists. None of them is a professional science-fictional artist, however: perhaps that makes the difference?))

Would it be blatant over-simplification to say that Mrs Le Guin's and Captain Chandler's answers to similar questions follow closely the lines set out by their fiction? Mrs Le Guin's response is terse, literate, sparse and much to the point; Captain Chandler's is loose, rambling, filled with anecdotes and much fun to read. Both are rewarding, both tell us things about the writers. But at the same time, both seem to me to follow their fictional styles remarkably closely - don't you agree? ((With qualifications, yes.))

And these are followed immediately by nothing less than convention reports. It seems interesting that Australian fandom seems to be repeating stages of American fandom; even in the major fanzines, a number of the major fan writers there seem to be spending much time writing meeting and convention reports, something we rarely see up here any more. I enjoy them all - it's always fun to hear about how the conventions differ from similar meetings in this country - but I wonder what the reaction of Australian fans is to all these generally similar con reports, moreover reports of conventions they themselves all know about. ((All? Come now, Jerry. I have around 800 Australian names on my address list, and we don't usually get more than 100 people at conventions.)) I mean, they're enjoyable to me, but I wonder how widespread that interest actually is.

Brosnan's bus trip is fascinating indeed, and I'd really like to see further adventures, if John is willing to write them. ((Me too.))

George Turner is one of the first people who writes the sort of thing one can really comment on. The embarrassing thing is that I agree with him so completely on the books he discusses which I have read, especially A CASE OF CONSCIENCE and CHRONOCULES. I quibble only in that his review of the Blish novel adds nothing to the body of existing criticism on this award-winner. ((But then, George writes almost entirely from memory. Who else do you know who could recall the name Egtverchi without referring back to the book?)) I would rather have seen George apply his five-fold critical ladder to more neglected and/or more recent work. My reactions to CHRONOCULES parallel his, though somewhat strangely. I found the novel holding while reading, and the reading interesting; I was impressed more in retrospect, realizing the author's achievements, than I was in the actual reading itself. And, also strangely, I have absolutely no desire to re-read the novel, and worse yet, haven't been inspired to go on to read Compton's other recent work. I admit this to be a fine novel but I'm a little reluctant to make a second try and some of the man's earlier work. I find this curious; can anyone else report similar reactions?

John, is there any chance of getting more reprints of "Iron Outlaw" for future issues? The glimpse you give us here is just too tantalizing to pass up. ((Not sure about this, Jerry. The series was very good, and I'd love to run the lot somewhere, but there seems some doubt about copyright. Also, the strip was in colour for the first few months, which would make it impossible to reproduce via electronic scanner and Roneo.))

Let me go back a moment to your editorial, to that last paragraph before the beginning of

the Le Guin article. I'm not sure I know exactly what you mean, John, and I'm not sure I agree with what I do understand. You seem to be blaming the lack of response to some of your fanzines on an over-concern on your part with physical impressiveness and a neglect of simple communication. Is this true so far? (More or less.) If you are referring largely to ASFR, I think I've some answers for you. There are some fanzines that, quality aside, always inspire comments by the very material used and discussions present. There are at the same time others, perhaps much better, which simply don't inspire the same sort of comments. It isn't that you don't reach people, it isn't that people aren't enjoying the magazine - it's simply a factor of the material and tone involved. Now, ASFR, with its high caliber serious discussion of the field, was not the sort of thing which inspired easy letters of comment; neither are Speculation nor SFC. This doesn't mean we're not enjoying and admiring them. It's simply that they're not really participation fanzines. By comparison, until recently Beabohema was a pretty poor fanzine, featuring fuggheaded material and lots of name-calling. But precisely because of this it prompted a lot of letters, arguing about the material.

(What I think I was getting at, Jerry, was the reaction to the later ASFRs and first Scythrop, and I felt this was largely a reflection of my own lack of purpose, if you like. Tons of style but nothing to say. Largely, but not entirely. I was, shall we say, pretty crapped off when I saw all the discussion of the Blish/Moskowitz issue in overseas fanzines - and hardly anyone wrote to me about it. But that's all in the past.)

JOANNE BURGER
55 Bluebonnet Ct
Lake Jackson
Texas 77566 USA

About the back cover of Scythrop 23: Does Australia have working paddlewheel boats? The only ones in the US are for tourists to ride. It would be fun to ride a real, working paddlewheel boat.

(John Alderson will put me straight on this if I'm wrong, but I think the only ones we have are for tourists to ride. Sorry about that Joanne. They're still fun, though, and their history is fascinating. If my library were not at this moment packed in thirty-eight cartons I would quote you some hilarious stories about them.)

JACK WODHAMS
PO Box 48
Caboolture
Queensland 4510

How praised is your work, Mr Bangsund, and justly so. (How many beers is that I owe you now, Jack?) What a quality piece of joinery Scythrop (Swindling Concupiscent Yahoos & Throwbacks Horror Report Overtly Pronounced) 25 is, surely to rival Chippendale, Louis XIV and other great craftsmen, not to mention Adam and his

fireplaces and Capability Brown. And not forgetting Frufru McOnogoshi - ah, but hers was an incomparable accomplishment. (Do tell.)

Like Keats and Chapman, who were, respectively, Chairman and Treasurer of a club. Their members were agitated - not as in a brothel, stupid, but their club members - because not only funds, but also their cellar, had run dry. "Women and children thirst," Chapman remarked.

"Aye, and that's as it should be: the duck of the Irish."

"And what is the duck of the Irish?" Chapman enquired.

"To be out for less than nothing," Keats responded heartily, "But let us not silly Sally, for the skewerate of the Crutch Deformed Church will requiem some Sacramento swine to perform his ablutions, and do y'know, we haven't a drop in the place."

"He'll be furious when he finds himself out of surplice."

Up then spoke a bearded member, and this curious phenomenon said, "I know where there's a drop!" Great dripping tears of Vat 69 fell down his swarthy cheeks as he cried, "Gallows and gallows of the stuff!"

"Isn't Vat 69 the Pope's telephone number?" asked someone. He was immediately dismissed from the club. Religion in politics is fair enough, but Booze is Sacred!

"Lead on McDuck," urged Keats. "Fingerloin expects every man this day to do his beauty."

So away we galloped, we galloped all three, Keats on his bicycle and Chapman and me. Thus was the good booze sought from apas to gents. Finally the kit was run to earthy in a girls college where, so 'twas said, maid's water was triple distilled into a potation comparable only to Mildara Hermitage. Here, in a midnight raid, reconnoitring the sleeping quarters and hinderparts &c of the young ladies, they discovered many squeals of allright.

"I say!" hissed Keats in Chapman's ear, he being a hisser of high hissing history, "Is this sort of thing really allowed?"

"Of course," replied Chapman, "Any sport in a dorm, old boy."

Back to 25: George Turner - excellent; Robert Bloch - very good; old Bangsund - so-so; Lee Harding - .25% said yes, .5% said no, leaving 99.25% uncommitted. Which is more than can be said for some who should be.

(I don't recall Harding being in 25, Jack, but then I'm only the typist you understand. Your K&C story is just about as far from the originals as anyone could get, although the concluding line is in the finest tradition. If you keep carbons, that will make two of us who know which lines I have interpolated in your story and which I have omitted. Do you mind? I have to pretend to be editor now and then. But I never well hardly ever muck about with G. Turner's stuff, and since we're off on K&C stories here's one of his. I don't understand a word of it.)

GEORGE TURNER
87 Westbury Street
St Kilda
Victoria 3182

Chapman had been in a state of depression for some weeks, and at length confessed his problem to Keats.

"It is a problem of erectile tissue," he said delicately.

"It no longer erects."

Keats murmured, "With openings on fair ease, C's forlorn."

"Precisely. Much wrath of Achilles, but no Homer."

"Homer!" quoth Keats. "The very man. My friend, Ulysses S. Homer!"

"A poet manque, perhaps?"

"He monkeys only with interiors. A surgeon."

"Ah, a brute. Homer neanderthalensis."

Nonetheless a consultation was arranged.

Dr Homer, on inspecting the offending member, muttered, "This thing of beauty should be a joy for ever." Keats stiffened as in a moment of *deja vu*.

"Success will be ours," continued the surgeon. "An incision - here! A peeling back of flesh - here - exposing the lower portion of the abdominal cavity. A tightening of the prostate sheath - there - and..."

Keats interrupted. "May I watch? I have always wanted to see a depressed internal economy reacting to inflation."

The operation was not a success. Keats comforted his friend by producing an Ode destined for immortality. It was called "On First Looking into Homer's Chapman".

It was perhaps unfortunate - almost fatal to the friendship - that it began: "His thing of beauty is as coy as ever."

(Hm. Ah, George, are you the same George Turner who writes those penetrating, if you'll pardon the expression, articles about *sf* and *such*? Even if you are, just remember that this is a Family Fanzine, okay? Someone has to remember that. ::: Somewhere amongst my unpacked boxes there is a letter from Ursula Le Guin which I feel rotten about mislaying and not publishing last issue. I put it in a special place where I would immediately find it here, and I seem to have forgotten what that special place was. I've flipped through the Jerusalem Bible, The Eighth Stage of Fandom, my bulging file of Letters From The Great And Famous, even my precious collection of Horizons, but it must have been some other special place. I do hope it turns up before this letter column is over. Meantime, while I continue looking for it, you can read this stuff from John Berry. Speaking of whom reminds me of the other John Berry, which allows me to remark that I have spent many happy hours in my cramped Canberra cell reading Retribution. Now there was a fanzine. They don't do 'em like that any more. I seem to have a complete set. O, for a game of ghoddminton right now! Saturday night, and I wouldn't be typing stencils if I had someone to play ghoddminton with.)

JOHN D. BERRY
625 Scott #607
San Francisco
California 94117 USA

I am laying finger to typewriter to use up the last dusty remnants of this ribbon (whose darkest hour is long, long gone) in order to make some belated response to quite a number of fanzines that you have sent me.

Because of the vagaries of the trans-Pacific mails and the

dock-workers of America, most of these fanzines arrived recently, despite their ancient publication dates. The oldest of them, Scythrop 21, is two years old. I was amazed when I looked and found this date. You say in later issues that hardly anyone responded to that issue, so you feel it was a failure. (Don't think I quite said that, John. Anyway, I meant that fandom wasn't ready at that stage for such excellence. Or something.) Nonsense - it was a lovely issue - but it was only one issue, a single isolated publication adrift in fandom. One of the laws of response that I've discovered in my time in the microcosm is that most people do not feel inclined to respond to a fanzine until it has had two or three consecutive issues in some reasonable amount of time and can achieve the illusion that next issue will be out similarly soon. (The Gillespie Syndrome!!) Fans' memories are long - they will never forget the image one had ten years ago - but perhaps in compensation it takes a long time to impress anything on them. You cannot expect the best response to come until you have been publishing regularly for a while. (I have decided that keeping a count of one's fan publications is a snare and a delusion and a pain in the arse, but this issue of Scythrop would be around my 120th fan publication. I know that's not what you meant, John, but don't you think this would be enough to make people aware that, sort of, well, here I am?)

Along with the law of response just mentioned, there is the added problem presented in Australian fanzines reaching this country. That is, again, the trans-Pacific mail. Anything arriving here from Australia, except letters, seems like a breath of timebinding from a far-removed past. There is a time difference in more than clocks between Australia and the United States. (Works the other way, too, John.) The same problem is there for European fanzines heading this way, too. For me, the effect is markedly similar between Australian and Swedish fandom. In both cases, local fannish fortunes rise and fall, and occasional representatives of the current fanzines make it overseas, but when they do they arrive in a vacuum; they create no impression; it's too easy to put them aside after a quick skim. I've been doing that for years. Each time a Swedish or Australian fanzine arrived, I would look it over, lay it down with the intention of going back and reading it fully some other time, and tell myself that one of these days I have to get all these people organized in my head and respond to their fanzines.

Right. Now's the time. So here I am asking for more. I don't even know whether you sent Scythrop and ASFM to me with response in mind. (I did, yes.) In any case, now that I've gotten down to reading these fanzines more-or-less thoroughly, I'm fascinated. You reached right out of the printed page and grabbed me, interested me, and forced me to write you this letter. What did it was mostly Scythrop 23 and 24, which arrived together, and sent me scurrying to find the other Bangsund fanzines. . . . I agree with your statement in 22 that communication is necessary as well as word-play. The editorial of 21 was, after all, entertaining but no more; the more recent editorials give me an impression of your life and personality that interests me. (Aside: Do all Australian fans have the wit and the sharpness that I've encountered in you and John Foyster and much of the outside material in your fanzines?) (John Foyster and I are pretty dull by Australian standards, John. You should meet Mervyn Binns some time. He has the knack of saying simple, devastating things like "Who?" or "Oh yes", which leave dull clods like John and me floundering.) I enjoy reading about your life and your thoughts, even when they revolve around your poverty. I get the impression that I'd love to sit down with you in a pub and talk for hours. I imagine I would find it easy, too, although I'm prone to frequent fits of untalkativeness. (All great artists are, John. It's a burden we have to bear. You would like Lee Harding, though: he talks non-stop, and if he thinks you're not listening he'll do something entertaining such as falling off his chair. Nice feller, Lee. I miss him a lot. No-one has fallen off a chair since I've been in Canberra.) The fulfilment of this wish will have to wait a while: I intend to visit Australia someday but I don't feel it's likely I'll get there for a couple of years at least. Perhaps I'll use the Australian worldcon as an excuse to go that year and then continue on a voyage around southern and eastern Asia. I have a great interest in seeing both India and China, and the latter is getting more and more practical for Americans all the time. At least I know that when I do get to Australia, there will be people I'll be interested enough to look up. Hopefully by then they will also know a little more of me. (I'll fight anyone in the house who hasn't heard of John D. Berry, d'ya hear me? Not only that, but I've made fourteen typing errors on this stencil so far, which would seem to indicate that I should take what remains of the flagon and retire for the night. Pardon me, John, but Saturday night with only a flagon and a stack of stencils is not conducive to producing a first-class fanzine. I'll continue tomorrow, unless that bird in room 172....)

((Well, so much for the bird in room 172. While I've been out creating Immortal Literature, she has found someone else. So here I am again. Sunday, 23rd April. Shakespeare's birthday, you know: would have been 408 today if he'd lived, poor bugger.))

Your taste as reflected in your fanzine runs close enough to mine that I am entertained and stimulated by Scythrop. I vastly enjoy the personal, fannish accounts offered by Bob Toomey way back in 21 and by John Foyster and John Brosnan in 22. (And you say you changed policy with 22? Looks to me like all you changed was the typeface.) I am bored by all the "discussion" of science fiction that goes on in most American fanzines, consisting as it does mainly of mediocre book reviews and ego-full articles by small-time pros, yet I'm stimulated and my interest recharged by the kind of intelligent, erudite consideration given the field in Scythrop, Speculation and, when it leans that way, Energumen. And I particularly appreciated Ursula Le Guin's article, even though I must echo David Compton and admit that I didn't wholly understand it, since Mrs Le Guin is quite possibly my favourite science fiction author. Certainly she interests me most at the present time, as she goes from strength to strength as a novelist. So you see, you publish a fanzine that interests me enough to produce two pages of rather dense prose already without once having talked about anything in the issues in detail.

((Two weeks later:)) And I guess it's going to stay that way. ... I wish I could do all the detailed comments on Scythrop that I wanted to do, and that it deserves, but they've all drained out of my mind. Just let me express once again my enormous enjoyment of all your fanzines. Please send more.

((Thanks, John, and if it doesn't sound too much like the proceedings of a mutual admiration society, may I say that I like your fanzines, too? I feel very honoured to be one of the few overseas recipients of H-t Sh-t, and enjoy it immensely. There is, interestingly, the same timebinding thing there: the issues arrive almost always out of sequence. Perhaps we should not altogether reject Ed Cagle's theories about the workings of the trans-Pacific mail system, detailed last issue.

There were other letters, there really were, but I can't find them, dammit. Maybe I should unpack a few more boxes - but if I do that there's nowhere to put the stuff, except back in the boxes. Things will be different in a week or so when I have some more shelving erected in the garage, but for the moment I'm confined to what has turned up so far. Some explanations might be in order for overseas readers... Early in March I started work in Canberra as a sub-editor for the Parliamentary Reporting Staff ("Hansard" to its friends). I left Melbourne in a hurry, and in fact the last batch of my belongings only arrived four days ago. I have far too much stuff to keep it all in a hostel room; I want to get at my things, naturally (I mean, who can live without being able to reach for his complete run of The Mentor?), and especially since the Campbell book is in one of them there boxes; I can't afford the kind of flat or house that I have been used to renting in Melbourne (the \$22-per-week flat I had in St Kilda, for example, would cost around \$40 here); and I am reluctant in any case to leave the hostel, since there are plenty of people there to talk to - the lady in room 172, for example - and it's pleasant not having to cook or wash up or clean anything, &c. The only solution was to rent something cheap elsewhere for storing my gear, publishing fanzines &c, and so I have a tiny room and a large garage in Kingston, about ten minutes walk from where I work and three minutes drive from the hostel.

Usually when I have moved in the past, it has been simply a matter of moving from one suburb of Melbourne to another. A carrier has taken the furniture and other bulky stuff, and I have made many trips in the car with books and other things too valuable to entrust to the carrier. Moving four hundred miles is slightly different. It makes me wonder why on earth fans seem to change addresses so often. Since, statistically, you are likely to have done this yourself, would you let me into your secret? Do you have only enough possessions to fill four tea-chests and the boot of a Volkswagen? Do you throw just about everything out before you move? At the moment I am inclined to stay in Canberra for ever and ever, simply because I can't stand the thought of going through all this again. About half my gear has been damaged in transit - books crumpled and waterlogged, refrigerator apparently attacked by a five-year-old with a sharp instrument on the outside and inhabited for some weeks by a family of incontinent sparrows, and so on. Yesterday it started raining and I discovered that the garage roof leaks. You can't win. But I am employed; that's something.))

GEORGE TURNER

PLUMBERS OF THE COSMOS

THE PHENOMENON THAT IS BRUCE GILLESPIE / SFC

THE title is John Bangsund's - a quote from the letter in which he assigned me the writing of this article with a seven-day deadline, damn his soul. But it's a good title and it's more than time that someone wrote about Bruce and SF Commentary - both unusual productions in their own right and fascinating in the amalgam.

And what better venue than Scythrop, the most literate fanzine in the business? (You don't agree? So go on, hit me. See if I care.) And since SF Commentary has made the Hugo voting ballot for this year, what better time for doing it?

BRUCE and John were my first major acquaintances in the fan field, and I started writing for both at about the same time. John I have come to know very well, but Bruce eludes me. It is not simply a matter of not seeing him so often, but of being unable to put a mental finger on the salient points of his personality. John I could reproduce recognizably in a few lines, for he is outgoing, unreserved and amenable to the technique of the evocative adjective coupled with the precise noun. Bruce is none of these things. (Closer friends will no doubt disagree, but the potter must work with what clay he has.)

Bruce presents to me not so much a shy personality, nor even a reserved one, so much as an invariant one. Our contacts run the gamut from serious discussion to laughter, but I never feel that I have reached the man within. He is consistent; he doesn't display those idiosyncrasies and departures from the norm of his own behaviour which allow you to say to yourself, "Aha - I have you now - I know what makes you tick."

And if you feel this may add up to a dull personality, be immediately undeceived. Conversation with Bruce is never less than interesting and often (since our literary and aesthetic views are poles apart) stimulating in unexpected directions. But I feel that if I could - just once - goad his temper to the point of calling me a drivelling idiot, or if I could catch him doing an imitation of Mae West with a blonde wig and a couple of coconuts, I would be able to get below the surface personality and glimpse what goes on in the deeps.

But to do even a little of that you must turn to his writings and his editing. Of which, more later.

This, of course, amounts to an admission that I can't do the man justice. But that won't stop me from trying.

Having a tendency to observe people as they speak and act, rather than as an aggregate of environment, experience and education, I manage to know remarkably little about the backgrounds of my friends, and what I know of Bruce is pitifully small. He was a school-teacher, and soon after we met he was seconded to Ararat (which, for the benefit of overseas readers, is a small town about 130 miles from Melbourne) and was unhappy about it. Perhaps my closest insight into his mind was provided by a letter he wrote me from there, a letter almost despairing in its reaction to the problem of teaching youth. At that time classroom disruption and anti-authoritarian behaviour was at its height, so you can imagine the devastating nature of his problems.

What remains in memory is the calm, the invariance, of his writing. Though the distress was apparent behind his words, I could not take any phrase and think that here was the core

of the matter, or select a group of words which cried out his feeling. Bruce tends to a completeness of expression which in its exactness veils the emotional content, as though he fears an emotional reaction may distort truth. The purist attitude.

Reading his reviews you will often find this same effect, of a man dealing justly with a phenomenon observed, noting its qualities and listing them for approbation or disapproval; but only once in a while will you discover whether he was really enthusiastic about the work or merely appreciative of a proper craftsmanship.

It can be argued that in a reviewer or critic this is a good thing. I choose to differ, and so must continue to read Bruce with unfailing interest and occasional frustration.

What more can I tell you?

Only that he works for the Victorian Education Department, though no longer as a teacher; that he produces the bulky SF Commentary with breath-taking regularity; that he produces also the occasional issue of Metaphysical Review (primarily for ANZAPA: John informs me that this publication was originally called The Marshian Chronicles, a title - provided by John, naturally - which Bruce quickly discarded); that he keeps up a formidable global correspondence; that he reads widely outside the narrow confines of science fiction; that he takes a deep interest in music and film; that he manages to be available when wanted.

It adds up to a twenty-five hour day, without unnecessary breaks for food or sleep. I don't know how it is done. I know only that my seemingly crowded schedule is a gap of sloth by comparison with his.

BUT to most who know of Bruce their knowledge is confined, particularly outside Australia, to SF Commentary. Why and how this fanzine began, I don't know. I could go to the phone now and ask him, but why should I? I prefer to look at the magazine itself and guess.

SFC is to me the product of a mind which loved sf, saw much of importance in it, disliked the shoddy treatment given it in so many other fanzines, decided that it could be better handled and that Bruce Gillespie was the boy who could so handle it.

And he was dead right.

From the beginning SFC has been "sercon". (How I dislike these in-group words! But that one serves to distinguish the solidity of Bruce's approach from that of the more freewheeling competition.) Its success must lie in the fact that it has never gone over the edge into dull pedantry, despite the occasional pushes in that direction given by my bete noire, Franz Rottensteiner. (But others like Franz's articles, and who am I to argue against personal taste? By all means eat cold porridge on fried fish if your horrid palate fancies it.)

And from the beginning SFC has had the Gillespie stamp indelibly upon it. It is not only that Bruce writes a fair amount of material himself, but that he has collected a body of contributors who reflect variations of his moods and attitudes, however much their individual statements may differ or oppose. They like his treatments and follow his leads, and the result is a homogeneous publication whose standard rarely dips.

Now, for my money, Bruce and John Bangsund are the two most individual editors in the fanzine field, in or out of Australia, in that they alone seem to impress their personalities firmly upon their publications, no matter who the contributors may be. Even design and layout speak the names of their begetters.

And in their magazines you observe the immense difference between the two men. Where Bruce ploughs a straight aesthetic furrow and seeds it for all it will produce, John is the apostle of new horizons, playing with this and with that, soliciting and selecting and discarding, looking for an ultimate effect and never quite achieving it. I hope he never does achieve it. Who wants Alexander with no fresh worlds to conquer? As John himself once wrote of a Le Guin novel, in ASFR, "The quest is all."

Digression: I have a suspicion that, for all the reasons given for John's killing off ASFR, one not given was that ASFR and SFC were too closely paralleling each other's tracks and he realized that his own personality must stand not in competition with another, but aside from competition, doing things that are uniquely Bangsund. And that is why Scythrop is now the most individualistic (I did not say "the best", though you are free to imagine I think it) fanzine in the field.

Bruce could never produce a Bangsund magazine, but he has produced the final product of the magazine John once aspired to, and there is little fan writing elsewhere as solid and informed as you will find in SFC.

WHILE it is difficult, for reasons of time and distance, for an Australian editor to produce the big name line-ups that appear regularly in many American and British fanzines, Bruce has worked some little miracles here. In the last six issues I find such names as Le Guin (twice), Blish, Lem (three times), Brunner, Rottensteiner (twice), Silverberg, Anderson (Poul), Chapdelaine, Wolfe, Farmer, Knight, de Camp and Boutland ("David Rome") among the professionals, while fan names of some meaning include Sandra Miesel, Ted Pauls, Paul Anderson, John Alderson and the ubiquitous, inevitable, sometimes infuriating but always readable John Foyster. (George Turner is there, too, but you can always skip his stuff.) Even for the sated, these names on a cover will cause the literary glands to salivate and the critical muscles to start their warming-up exercises.

But do professional names mean anything? I think they do. They mean that these busy people are prepared to write to and for an editor whom they can regard as an equal, as one who will treat their material with respect and view it with the eyes of a man who knows quality when he sees it.

Agreement and disagreement are of little importance in themselves, but the clash of values and ideas is the very stuff of literary life, and SFC provides this aplenty. Bruce realizes this and sometimes brings it bluntly to the fore, as when he printed in the same issue two thoroughly opposed reviews, one by himself, one by Sandra Miesel, of Poul Anderson's TAU ZERO. And the element of polemic is never long absent from the pages: Franz is always in trouble with someone or other, Bruce himself doesn't mind knocking down a tribal fetish or two, many a complacent intellect receives a swift kick in the midriff and even poor George Turner collects the occasional sideswipe from someone who doesn't realize what a harmless, inoffensive old dear he really is.

And no-one with a taste for sadism should have missed Philip Jose Farmer's "Letter to Mr Lem" in SFC-25. That Farmer's rebuttal of Lem was not the coup de grace it might have been was due to an over-injection of tartness, to the detriment of the whole, but it remains a collector's item for lovers of the literary feud and must have left the eminent Mr Lem some sour food for thought.

BUT the incidental virtues of SFC are not my theme. I could pick an anthology of delights from the last dozen issues, but you should be picking them for yourself. The backbone of SFC is the "Commentary" part of its title. The magazine exists, finally, for criticism: for informed criticism where such is available; for scholarly criticism when that snorting beast can be corralled; for any kind of honestly-intended criticism which shows an advance on the puerility which disfigures so many fanzines.

Franz Rottensteiner has written that Australian fanzines display the highest standard of fan criticism. Be that as it may, his judgement must be based mainly on SFC, for John Bangsund has eschewed reviewing in Scythrop in favour of wider-ranging literary fare. And indeed it is to SFC you must go to discover the best that Australian fans are doing in this line. Frankly, I think there is little good sf criticism anywhere in the world outside the work of Blish, Knight and Aldiss. Bruce would include Rottensteiner and Lem. I wouldn't, but let's not waste argument on that.

But something must be said about Bruce's own reviewing and his general mode of attack on fiction. Now I have never discussed this with him in more than a fragmentary,

inconclusive fashion, so I cannot quote his views. I can only read his reviews and react to them. And my reaction is not entirely favourable. (Gentle, kindly, devoted reader: Did that last sentence strike a jarring note? We are not in the gracious-tribute business. We are looking at SFC and Bruce Gillespie and, in so doing, I must say that my reaction to his reviewing is not entirely favourable.)

Let's set aside mere differences of opinion as to the worthiness of this book or that. They don't count. Set aside also Bruce's occasional inexplicable detailed treatment of a book which simply isn't worth so much concentration. The writer writes about what he wishes to write about, and we accept it gratefully. Let us consider his way of going about it.

Behind every article - and he favours about 2000 words for proper attention to a novel (and rightly so for a view in depth) - I hear the one-time school-teacher treading the dais; the school-teacher who knows how literary appreciation should be taught, the list of matters to be looked for and appraised, the necessity of quotation to verify a statement, the plus-minus attitude to matters of grammar and setting out, the method of writing a classically "correct" review.

When asked how to go about reviewing (and I am asked), my first recommendation is to forget all you ever learnt in school about literary appreciation. Then you

- (a) decide what the author is trying to say, or if indeed he is trying to say anything;
- (b) consider carefully what he has actually said, which might not be what he set out to say;
- (c) set this out succinctly, and then get on with the business of how effectively or ineffectively he says it - and there, for most purposes, is your review.
- (d) If the book is very bad, try to avoid reviewing it at all.

I wish, occasionally and wistfully, that Bruce would cast off the shackles of literary appreciation and adopt a looser attitude to criticism. But then he wouldn't be Bruce any more, would he. No, no, let him continue as he does, because in his earnest diggings into philosophy and metaphysics he often turns over a stone to reveal crawlers the rest of us had not noticed. And then we have to admit that the classical approach has its virtues.

And every now and then the classical mask slips and a little of the inner man shows through.

There was that review of ALL JUDGMENT FLED, wherein he kept recalling Joseph Conrad in order to justify consideration of certain quoted passages. Since the book was essentially a run-of-the-mill adventure which would have kept Conrad, grave-clothes and all, rolling rapidly as Iser, I caught a tiny glimpse of Bruce carried away by sheer romantic magic, falling for the second-rate because it struck a sympathetic chord, until judgement really was fled.

Well, it happens to all of us, and I love better the man who doesn't for ever resist romance in favour of intellect.

And there was that more recent tiny remark concerning his lack of great interest in THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS: "I just don't believe in happy endings, I suppose."

That one brought me up with a round turn, presenting as it did a picture of one who distrusts fortune, who sees humanity only in terms of eventual disaster, a child of our time who knows that the only realities are mortality and its dreary companion, entropy, and that the only true literature is the literature of despair. That is too grim a summation, of course, but one must never ignore these tiny indications; when a critic lets one slip there is always a vulture hovering to snap it up.

But, all in all, the test of criticism is its effectiveness, and if reader reaction be a criterion - and I think it is - then Bruce is effective. That he and I work from opposed points of view is of no account in estimating validity or success. So I must continue being frustrated by Bruce's criticism, and continue wondering why he values mine.

THE real pointer to Bruce is that monthly editorial essay headed, "I Must Be Talking To

My Friends", in which a gentle ramble round this and that and personal items and impersonal comments leads with a quite deceptive naturalness into the letter section or, as in SFC 24, unexpectedly into a long book review. Read this column always. If it is never wildly exciting, it is never a bore, and over the years it has become a little history of the doings of Bruce Gillespie, of his likes and dislikes, his hopes and fears and successes and failures, and of his sf friends.

You might remark that John does something similar in his Scythrop editorials. Not a bit of it. Bruce's is the cool diary tone, the quiet ramble. John's is the outburst of a bloke who finds all the world wonderful, even its disasters, and can't wait to share his perceptions with you. All they have in common is their use of their personalities to open the proceedings in each issue.

There is no valid comparison between the two men. They might belong to different worlds. Bruce is the keeper of the keys of dedication, research and discussion - and if you doubt that, read his series on Philip K. Dick. Incomplete and ultimately unsatisfactory as it is, it bears the hallmark of the wrestler with his theme, who will not settle for less than the best he can offer. Against him, John is the verbal acrobat whose overt aim is delight. Be not fooled: the delight is only froth on the serious comment, the acrobatics only a means of wearing truth as a garland rather than as a burden.

These are the editorial faces of the producers of the two best fanzines in my experience, and God knows I have suffered many. Hugo or no Hugo, these editors are with us, I hope, to stay. I can say a little prayer for Bruce's nomination this year, and have a little hope for John for next year. Who cares if one is better than the other, or less than the other? Each is, in my mind, unchallenged in its own sector of the field, and I take some satisfaction in the frenzied chore of writing for both.

That John should choose this present means of offering applause to the opposition tells you something of each of them.

And, whether Hugos go to the most deserving or only to the most vociferous, Bruce has earned a chance at his.

AN INTERLUDE AND A FOOTNOTE BY THE EDITOR

1. INTERLUDE:

Dear Bruce,

During the 1930s that great man Clarence Darrow was honoured on his birthday by a banquet given by his friends, at which they - celebrities from every walk of American life - eulogized him to hell and gone. Religious gents, scientists, judges, literary blokes - all declared him one of the greatest guys they'd ever known. When they had finished their speeches, Darrow slowly rose to his feet and said in that gloriously deceptive drawl of his: "I'm the one all this talk's been about. I always thought I was a hell of a fellow, but now I'm sure of it."

Do you get that same feeling from George's article? (I hope you do.)

Yrs &c, JB

2. FOOTNOTE:

Okay, enough of this mucking about. You've read George's biased views about Gillespie, now here's mine: I agree with him.

But I am amazed (not to mention inordinately flattered) to learn so much about myself from an article about Bruce. I mean, I always thought I was introverted, reserved and barely amenable to anything, for example. Except on Tuesdays: I'm usually pretty outgoing on Tuesdays. Maybe I'm just catatonic. And my "verbal acrobatics" are "only a means of wearing truth as a garland", are they? Crikey, I wish I'd said that - it's

beautiful - but is that me he's talking about? I have always felt that deep down I am superficial. Maybe George has seen deeper down than I ever will. Maybe... But enough of this: let's talk about Gillespie.

To the best of my knowledge, Bruce hit the downward fannish trail one day in 1967 when he bought a copy of ASFR in McGill's Newsagency in Melbourne. Shortly thereafter he sent me a subscription, wrote letters, submitted reviews and articles and so on. People keep on pestering me like this: I'm used to it. I ignored all this neofannish enthusiasm, of course. Quite apart from being bone-lazy (George forgot to mention that, bless him), I believe that encouraging fans with appreciative-sounding replies to their letters - worse still, publishing their stuff - gives them a false sense of significance in the scheme of things. Do that, and after a while they even stop calling you Mister.

But this Gillespie fellow persisted. I thought that living in Bacchus Marsh ("sounds like a drunken bog," Harry Harrison once remarked) as he did, I was pretty safe. But, no: he came to see me. (Lee Harding will tell you that Bruce really came to see him, but you know what Lee is like - outgoing, unreserved, full of himself and overflowing. You know the type.)

I gave him short shrift, of course. It was all we ever got to eat at that stage anyway (God, I was embarrassed when Leigh Brackett rang from Sydney and I was out buying fish'n'chips at the time - but that's another story) and be damned if any visitor fared better than we did. Except when Bert Chandler called, of course. For him, we always kept some long shrift in the larder. At least, Diane did. She was mistress of that part of the house and Bert was her pet visitor. (Later on her pet visitor was a lovely Great Dane who used to bring George Turner with him, but I digress.)

Diane could never quite see Bruce's essentially noble and sensitive fannish soul. Neither could I, come to that. But one morning at Ferntree Gully, Diane asked Bruce if he would like eggs for breakfast. (It had been a heavy weekend and we'd run out of shrift.) Bruce said, modestly, that he wouldn't mind. Diane asked him if he would like them fried, poached, scrambled or boiled. Bruce, shuffling his enormous feet a bit and looking embarrassed, said, What's easiest for you? A real gentleman, Bruce. His Churches of Christ upbringing, probably. I'm a bit like that, too. Diane said, Boiled. I'll have them fried, said Bruce. From that moment on, oddly, Diane disliked Bruce. But I... I knew, instantly, there and then (though naturally I never let on), that this man had what could only be described as an essentially noble and sensitive fannish soul. I knew, instinctively, that he would Go Places.

And he did. He moved from Bacchus Marsh to Ararat - even further away from Melbourne. (Diane received the news with unseemly glee.) He continued to send me articles and things, which I carefully filed away somewhere or other. Then, at the beginning of 1969, the low hound published a fanzine! Couldn't wait for me to publish his rotten stuff, so he started his own magazine!

The first issue looked awful. Bruce sent the stencils to Lee, who ran them off in the workshop behind our garage. (I had taken the precaution of putting sand in the Roneo, of course.) Someone - Lee, I think - collated and posted this monstrosity. Incredibly, people liked the thing - SF Commentary or whatever its silly name was. And went on liking it. Bruce bought his own duplicator, left Ararat to work as some kind of journalist with the Education Department in Melbourne, earned far more money than I did, received more mail than I did, and churned out issues of his worthless magazine as fast as he thought of them. Some odd people in Adelaide even made him Guest of Honour at their Convention. I began to feel that I had perhaps underestimated him. I had. The man - shy, retiring, introverted, insecure, twisted as he might be - is utterly imperturbable. Dedicated, as George said, and works like mad (which is a pretty dirty trick).

Cunningly, feigning imminent bankruptcy, early this year I sold him most of my record collection, thinking he would become so immersed in classical music that he wouldn't have time for SFC, and meantime I could catch up with him. It didn't work. The fiend! - he types stencils even while listening to Mahler and Schubert! I find it hard to forgive a man like that.

But I suppose by mundane standards he's quite a likeable and even rather admirable kind of chap, really, and I don't mind if he wins a Hugo.

Naturally, I am way past such childish things. This year, anyway.

And now: the bit you've been waiting for. Something by your friend and mine, Stanislaw Lem, and it's not in SF Commentary. (That's what I call really sinking the boots in. Suffer, Gillespie!) The interview first appeared in the Russian journal Voprosi Literaturi. It is translated by Franz Rottensteiner (you sure this isn't SFC?) and liberally paraphrased by John Bangsund.

STANISLAW LEM

MUSHROOMS IN THE BASKET

Let me begin with a traditional question: What are you writing at the moment?

I have just finished a book called SCIENCE FICTION AND FUTUROLOGY. It is a theoretical treatise on the science fiction novel, and as you can imagine, before I could even start writing it I had to plough through a mountain of sf books.

Why did you undertake such a work? Do you intend to stop writing sf? Would you rather write about it as a branch of literature?

I will go on writing science fiction, certainly, but there seemed many good reasons for doing this book. I have always been interested in the theory of literature, and of course this book is not my first excursion into this field: THE PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGE, for example, I regard as a kind of preparation for SF AND FUTUROLOGY. Then, as a writer of science fiction, I am very interested in why the genre has attracted so little serious attention - why it is considered so unimportant.

Has your work on this book helped you at all in your own fiction writing?

On the whole I haven't changed my basic point of view - and, certainly, my research hasn't yielded any key or formula which gives automatic mastery of science fiction! The same difficulties and doubts remain with me which accompany any creative work.

Science fiction is, for me, not an end in itself. Rather it is a method for understanding human nature. Just as a scientist achieves his most precise results by experimenting in an artificially created environment, so I can best understand what is happening on Earth right now by creating a science fiction novel.

So you are at the same time a science fiction writer and a realist.

If you want to put it that way, yes. But a realist in the sense that I am creating models of the real problems of life. In this sense, my book PROJECT MASTER'S VOICE can be called a realistic novel. In it I intended to depict the confrontation of humans with thinking beings from outer space, and to show how this contact would influence human relationships. The problem of getting along with one's fellow man, I'm sure you will agree, is not a problem unique to science fiction.

Tell us about this book. How is it constructed? Did you have any special problems in writing it?

I started out with only some vague notions about the basic idea. A message of some kind is received from outer space, and a group of scientists tries to decode it. The message provides the means of illustrating the relationships between the characters in the story.

The protagonist is a scientist working on this decoding job. I began by describing him in the third person, and in so doing adopted the form of the traditional novel. I had written quite a large part of the novel when I started feeling that the work wasn't turning out as I wanted it - and perhaps at this stage I should mention that my usual way of dealing with work which doesn't satisfy me is to discard everything I have done and start again. That is what I did in this case. But for a long time I wondered what it was that was causing this dissatisfaction. How could I construct the novel differently?

In most cases I make my protagonist a man of my own age, which allows me to spot any inconsistency in the behaviour of my characters, but this time I decided to depart from this practice and make my hero a man of about sixty. There were advantages in doing this. It was not necessary to describe in the story all of the small details of everyday life - which I could only have done with much difficulty anyway, since the story is set in the United States and I have never been there. But there were disadvantages, too. My protagonist, Professor Hogarth, is a mathematician, and therefore not able to describe things as a writer might. I persuaded myself that this wasn't necessarily a hindrance: as a scientist he is used to thinking, and his thoughts are not confined utterly to his discipline, so it is only natural that he will also think about what is happening on Earth.

In this way I had written about half the novel, when other difficulties arose. I did not know how to get over to my readers just how difficult this decoding job was, without simplifying the problem. I had to compromise. Professor Hogarth's notes had to be intelligible to laymen, not just to other scientists. There had to be technical details, but I couldn't overload the novel with them. These notes had to be, if at all possible, a truly human document. For example, I wanted to avoid errors in describing the professor's environment, and to do this, before the manuscript went to the printer, I sent it to a friend who had lived in America for some years. His comments were most helpful. But the presentation of Professor Hogarth's notes as a "factual report" was just one part of the over-all problem - I mean the problem of decoding the message and translating it into an Earth language. So long as I stuck to the documentary style of writing I felt on firm ground, but every now and then I had to depart from this. You know, there are rather special difficulties when you are writing about, say, talking mushrooms...

I can believe that! Are you conscious of flaws in your work?

Oh, yes. Recently when I was revising an earlier novel, RETURN FROM THE STARS, for a new edition, I distinctly felt that some things could be better expressed in a shorter space, and I found also that I had disregarded certain premises I had set up. This book is based on a conflict arising from the inability of an astronaut who has just returned from a long flight to distant planets to establish a satisfactory relationship with the generation which has grown up on Earth while he was away.

The protagonist is so different from his fellow men that he cannot bridge the gulf between them, and of course I had to indicate these differences and develop them. To do this I introduced the concept of "bettrization" - a surgical operation which had the effect of removing aggressive instincts. Since most of mankind had been bettrized, human nature had altered and improved immensely while the astronaut was away, and this concept served to really show up the peculiarity of the hero. However, by introducing it, I had unintentionally simplified the main problem. And to make things worse, towards the end of the novel I took pity on him and allowed him to be happy with the woman who loved him. The serious social conflict I had intended had turned into a love affair.

The over-simplification of the problem, and its solution, came about partly because when I started work on the book I had only the vaguest idea of the plot. Anyway, despite

all this, the novel contains some worthwhile ideas and I am still very fond of it. I have talked about this at length simply to demonstrate that in science fiction an idea, in itself, doesn't mean anything. Sometimes a good idea is exhausted after half a page; sometimes an idea which doesn't look very promising when you start writing, grows, develops, and might even provide exactly the right shape for the novel. I have to admit that when I am experimenting there is a lot that doesn't seem to depend on me at all, that seems to evolve by itself. Creative peaks like this - during the writing of SOLARIS, for instance - come quite unexpectedly. In that book I had no idea what was waiting for Kris Kelvin on Solaris: I only knew that something would happen there which would terrify the space station personnel.

Would you say you were a kind of slave to your intuition?

Not at all. But, you know, you can't continually force yourself to write. It's so much better when your writing comes from an inner need, when you feel driven by some force from within. You have to believe, at all times, in what you are creating - but of course you can't feel like that all the time, so it's unwise to force yourself.

Although I am a realist, I do not follow any rational method in my work. Before I start, I have not developed any plan or scheme, and as I have already mentioned, when I get into a book and discover that I dislike what I have written, I throw it out and start again from scratch. This makes it rather difficult for anyone to tell which of my books are of a cast, and which I have made several attempts at. For example, some readers have mentioned to me that they thought the story "Terminus" had been written at one sitting. This was not the case. First there were several fragments which I could not connect in any way, and then I couldn't decide on a suitable ending; I wrote several before I was satisfied.

Incidentally, quite often a block like this can turn out better than a lucky invention. Once I wrote a story about a robot, a story set in the far future when men had killed off all the beasts of prey on Earth and, to satisfy their hunting instincts, had created artificial animals. Central to the story was one of these robotic animals; in fact the story was told by it. Try as I might, I just couldn't get the story to come out the way I wanted it. I wracked my brain for the reason for this, and eventually succeeded. It was so obvious. The story being told by a robot, naturally the robotic animals took on something of the features of men - and they were being hunted down. I had conceived the narrator as the worst and most treacherous of the mechanical animals, but against my will it became an object of pity.

While I am talking about ideas, I think I should say something about my readers. I have always been interested in who it is I am writing for. The important thing is communicating ideas and so on to the reader, and if your basic idea is worthless and you really have nothing to communicate, then not even a "Space Odyssey" will save you...

Do you, in fact, get much feedback from your readers?

On average I get about thirty, thirty-five letters a week - many of them from readers in the Soviet Union. It's interesting how different these letters are from the letters I get from my fellow Poles. Often the writers simply thank me and ask me to continue writing. Some letters are especially touching: they invite me to spend my holidays with them, or go fishing with them on Lake Baykal. Sometimes I am asked for advice on everyday problems. It is always very moving for an author to get such direct proof of the affection and esteem his readers have for him.

Your very first work, THE MAN FROM MARS, was science fiction. Then your second novel, TIME NOT LOST, obviously grew out of your experiences during the Fascist occupation and your connection with the Resistance. Why is it that instead of following this up you returned to sf and wrote THE ASTRONAUTS?

That is rather difficult to answer. As a child I was very fond of the novels of Verne and Wells. It was during the occupation actually that I wrote THE MAN FROM MARS, in Lvov. My family used to read it in the evenings, but none of us really took it seriously.

When I wrote *THE ASTRONAUTS*, everything was different. At the beginning of the 1950s I spent some time at the Artists Home in Zakopane, finishing my novel about the Occupation and more or less relaxing. In my spare time I often went walking in the mountains with a colleague who had the room next to mine. Once we got talking about science fiction, and he said it was a pity there was no sf in Poland. I said this was due simply to the indifference of Polish publishers to the genre; if the publishers became interested they would have no trouble finding authors.

Soon afterwards I went home to Krakow and forgot this little discussion entirely. Some time later I received a contract in the mail from the publishing house, Czytelnik, in Warsaw. It was signed by the man I had talked to in Zakopane. He was the director of this publishing house. All I had to do was fill in the title of the novel I wanted to write, and sign the contract. I had no ideas at all for a science fiction novel, so I just invented a title and wrote it down. It was *THE ASTRONAUTS*.

So the appearance of *THE ASTRONAUTS* may be considered a result of pure chance. It certainly would have been far more logical to continue writing about the Occupation. But I don't enjoy writing endless variations on a theme, and *TIME NOT LOST*, after all, is a three-volume work. In science fiction, too, I don't like repeating myself. I prefer to experiment. I feel at home in science fiction, it is true, but the important thing for a writer is that he should be guided by his inner voice, wherever it directs him.

What opinion do you have today of your early work?

For many reasons I am dissatisfied with my early sf novels. *THE ASTRONAUTS*, for instance, is based mainly on the description of technological problems. I am aware of many imperfections in that book and *THE MAGELLAN NEBULA*, but I don't intend to revise them. They should stay the way they are, because they are part of my development as an artist, and my development more or less reflects the evolution of the genre as a whole.

How do you set about writing a new book?

Well, I've said that I am no rationalist in my working methods, but this is not to say that I don't make notes or do any planning beforehand. The best time of the year for me is June, when I spend most of my time at the Artists Home in Zakopane. This is the "silly season". It is raining, there is no-one around, nothing to disturb me. I work for nine or ten hours without stopping, sometimes writing thirty pages a day. This, of course, is just a rough draft. Later I revise it two or three times and then leave it in the desk drawer for a few months. When I take it up again it is still only a draft, but it is something definite to work on. This is so important, because in Krakow I can't work all day: there are interruptions all the time - the phone ringing, guests arriving, mundane problems. So, like a gatherer of mushrooms, I try to accumulate a supply for the whole year at Zakopane. Once the mushrooms are in the basket, the initial work is done, even if the seasoning still takes a while to prepare.

- Stanislaw Lem

JB: I can't help feeling that a different interviewer - someone like Bruce Gillespie, George Turner, James Blish, for instance - would ask Mr Lem rather different questions. Which is not to say that the above is not a most interesting insight into Mr Lem's approach to sf and writing in general, of course: I have read it many times while preparing it for publication, and I find it most rewarding. As soon as I can wangle a month in Zakopane, for example... But, seriously, what questions would you ask Stanislaw Lem about his work, his life, his approach to writing? As an exercise in international sf bridge-building - also as an exercise in discovering what Scythrop readers are interested in - I invite you to send me the questions you would like to ask Stanislaw Lem. If there are enough of them, I will ask him to answer them, and Bruce or I will publish his response.

CRITICANTO

MERVYN BARRETT ON BOOKS
ROBIN JOHNSON ON FILMS
GARY DEINDORFER ON MUSIC

(But what's all that stuff doing
in Scythrop?)

MERVYN BARRETT reviews:
PLANET OF SEX AND ORGIES
by Bonnee du Bomb
(Peyote Press: US\$1.75)

It is the year 50 083. An expedition mounted in the USA has lifted off and headed into "the spatial depths above Earth", on a never-disclosed mission. It is crewed by two happily married couples named Jim and Katherine and Jack and Nancy. They have been chosen

specially for their compatibility and moral qualities. Their spaceship - named The Hemisphere - is invaded by a mysterious germ which they name the sex bug. It lodges, usually, in the genitals or near them. It can travel from one body to another during copulation and is nourished by the ejaculations and secretions released at orgasm. It needs at least twenty orgasms a day, and if deprived of them becomes dangerously radio-active.

In order to survive, sexual activity must be stepped up among the crew, and multi-orgasmic orgies are the result, with both men "enjoying one or other of the two women at the same time and in as many ways as they can think of". Katherine resists the idea at first but after she is tied to the bed and forced to participate she comes to terms with the idea. "In fact, Nancy was bending over Katherine, and as the two cocks drove Katherine to wild ecstasies Katherine momentarily forgot what a prude she was and her hands reached for Nancy's pussy, and then Nancy slumped her pelvis down, and Katherine's tongue worked its way up Nancy's cunt, and soon her tongue was lapping the walls of the vagina. Now the sex bug being composed of billions of swirling atoms, rushed through the blood cells, and swishing past the lymphocytes, the bug got into her lymph nodes and hurried into the glands behind her ear. There the sex bug rested for a while, its electronic waves radiating outward, trying to locate the exact place where the orgasm was situated... And when the bug moved into the oceans of saliva in Katherine's mouth, it found itself deliciously breathing the oxygen from Nancy's orgasm."

The men of The Hemisphere take the demands of the sex bug and the change it brings in conditions on board in their stride, but Nancy, although she is the more sexually liberated of the two women, realizes that their mission is doomed while all shipboard routines take second place to the needs of the bug. She reasons that if they can set the ship down on some populated planet, the sex bug might abandon them and take up residence in some other people. She talks it over, via spacephone, with the expedition's leader back on Earth, Dr Neuclear of Berkeley, and he agrees.

"The planet that seemed most likely to Nancy was a peculiar planet, Eterbe. It had a multi-strata atmosphere. That is, it was caught between two galaxies. This meant that two entirely different currents of magnetism circled round the planet..."

Unknown to the Earth people, the planet they have chosen has been conquered and is occupied by people from the planet Dartel. Earth has been at war with Dartel for 385 years. The Dartellans are three feet high and humanoid. Male children have their penises removed at birth and female children their vaginas closed off, because Dartellans consider sex to be disgusting. This view of sex is not held by the natives of Eterbe, who some three generations back grew dissatisfied with their plant-like methods of procreation and through the discoveries and inventions of their leading scientist #11130 now have penises four feet long, and vaginas of corresponding length.

In an audience with the Dartel ambassador, Prism Pure, this same scientist, #11130, taunts the Dartellan and tells him the Eterbians will one day overthrow their oppressors. Towards this end, #11130 has developed a sex bug and fired it into space in the hope that it will take root in the bodies of some Earth people, who will land on Eterbe and help with the revolution. Prism Pure is furious but unbelieving. However, the arrival of The Hemisphere makes him change his mind.

Nancy and Jack leave the ship to investigate the planet and are soon, happily, receiving the attention of some of the planet's extraordinary flora - male and female sex-crazed flowers. Their friends back on board the ship are not so fortunate: "Prism Pure lost no time in working his way on to The Hemisphere and making Jim and Katherine his prisoners. Katherine had been in the process of giving Jim the fuck she had promised him, and Prism Pure was more than happy to let them continue their fun and games while he watched on. Prism Pure had seen movies of humans fucking, but this was the first time that he was able to sit back in his space chair and contemplate fucking in person." The Dartellans, it would seem, are somewhat obsessed sexually, and they secretly envy penis-retaining races. They spend a lot of their spare time watching "educational" blue movies, and any Earth people who are captured are made to fuck for the private enjoyment of their captors.

#11130 finds a way of transforming himself to look like an Earth person - in their natural form Eterbians are rather like giant centipedes - and after giving his daughter the treatment also, they go off to find and help the Earth people. #11130 introduces himself to Nancy and Jack as "Dr Strange" and his daughter as "Dorothy". He explains what is happening on the planet, and who they are, and the four of them go off to the Palace of the Great Leader, where Katherine and Jim have been taken and are being submitted to sexual torture. The Great Leader is unaware of the revolution being planned because the only Dartellan who knew of it - Prism Pure - has been atomized by the head of Dartellan Security, Max Cosmos, for admitting to having had lewd thoughts about his prisoners and the desirability of having a cock sewn on to replace the one removed at birth.

At the Palace, in spite of Dr Strange suffering a near-fatal heart attack, which later on requires a heart transplant, the four rescue Jim and Katherine and, with Destructor Guns, destroy the Palace. This starts a successful revolution which soon involves all the people of the planet, and 20 000 Dartellan soldiers are wiped out by the Eterbians.

Dorothy has meantime fallen in love with Jack, and surrenders her virginity to him while still in Earth form. "I'm all yours, honey. Take me. Take me now. I'm ready," Dorothy moans, "encouraging him to plunge his hard, and long, heavy cock into her body, and to thrash her virginity away from her". She asks to be taken back to Earth, and although Jack agrees to this at first, she realizes after they have made love that he probably has no intention of doing so. Angered through being so deceived, she vows revenge, but is later talked into taking a more charitable view of the incident by an Eterbian friend who has loved her since childhood.

Her father, though, motivated by a desire to take all the credit for the successful revolution for himself, makes a last-minute effort to bring about the Earth people's destruction. The attempt fails and the Earth people leave Eterbe safely.

Back on board, in space, heading for Earth (and what happened to that mission?), the four make contact via the spacephone with Dr Neuclear. "'Where have you people been?' he asked. Nancy focussed the screen in so that the Doctor was coming in loud and clear. 'We've just been involved in some intergalacial revolutions. That's all,' Nancy said happily. 'Really? Well, you ought to know that Earth finally conquered Dartel, and they have surrendered completely...'"

This welcome news has the effect of restoring harmony and happiness to the spaceship, and the story ends: "Jim and Katherine slept in their own bed that night. Jack and Nancy slept in theirs. Now that there was no sex bug, and no interference from Dr Strange, they could go back to being two married couples, fucking privately, in their own beds."

Since the readers of this journal are unlikely to find the book on their neighbourhood

news-stand, and because its happy ending was inevitable, I have had no compunction in detailing its plot and revealing its ending. What is most interesting about the book is its style, and only by quoting large chunks of it could I hope to get the feeling of it across. It is, I think, an amalgam of the style of an energetic nine-year-old who occasionally gets bored in the middle of a description and switches to something else, and a style that I can only describe as synoptic. The effect which I have been trying to share with you is one that proceeds from a sort of state of disbelief to a state of disorientation, wherein one starts to think that absolutely nothing could be just plain written like this, that perhaps it is significant somehow.

One possible answer to the question whether anything could be just plain written like this is suggested in the advertisements in the back of the book. Two other works by Bonnee du Bomb are listed: one is entitled BOBBY BOTTOM AND THE LESBIANS, the other, simply, MAKE LOVE. The blurb for the latter mentions that the book contains "the first American interview with the authoress herself". Taking this into account, together with the peculiarities of style and punctuation, my theory is that the book we have been considering was not written in English, and that its author has been ill-served by her translator.

It is a familiar situation in the mainstream of literature, but not so far of major concern in the science fiction field. I believe, though, that this situation may change, and that the work of the translator is going to be of great importance. Perhaps when that time comes, along with new translations of the works of Jules Verne, we will be given a truer insight into the literary quality of the work of Bonnee du Bomb - perhaps initially through a new and more sympathetic translation of PLANET OF SEX AND ORGIES.

JB: The above review was rejected by SF Commentary. Possibly this was because Bruce knows as well as I do that our good friend Mr Barrett is not incapable of inventing a book for review purposes. For my part, I don't care much whether the book and its unlikely author exist or not. The porn novel with a quasi-sf setting is obviously upon us - and I feel Mervyn has said just about all that needs saying about it.

ROBIN JOHNSON reviews:
BUBBLE

BUBBLE is ((ah, was, at the time this was written)) on view at the Rapallo, Melbourne, in what is described as the 4-D Spacevision process, but which seems in every way identical

with the polarizing 3-D system first demonstrated to me at the Festival of Britain in 1951. The fourth dimension referred to is time. According to the blurb supplied with the glasses which have to be balanced over any already worn, the technical problems which made the feature-length 3-D films hard to watch have been solved. I suspect, however, that the expensive optical devices necessary at the projector and the cost of the special glasses will continue to keep this advance away from most theatres.

As for the film, it is a rehash of an old theme. In a fait accompli, aliens have grabbed a motley assortment of humans, for reasons known only to themselves, and put them in a glass dome - apparently away from any outside human interference. The protagonists blunder in unnoticed, escaping the conditioning given to the other humans. Gradually they realize that All Is Not Well: the others are almost zombies, each replaying a brief segment of his past life. After one of the heroes discovers that the twenty-mile bubble only extends a few feet below ground, and smashes the conditioning gadget, The Shadow Is Lifted, and zombies and heroes together march out into what might or might not be a Brave New World.

Every cliché is faithfully reproduced, and only the use of the new/old process is of even the slightest interest, inhibiting as it obviously does the tendency to use stock shots for much of the footage. One to miss.

JB: Hell, that makes two to miss. What sort of a review section is this? Haven't you guys read or seen anything lately you like? This isn't SFC, you know; I don't mind publishing favourable reviews, really. Hang on: here's a favourable review...

GARY DEINDORFER reviews:
WIPE YOUR REAREND
The Joe Eclectic All Electric
Good Karma Band
(Poop Records: ASS8915 (stereo)
HOLE5198 (quadrasonic))

Sitting on a lavender psychedelic cloud of solipsism, my speakers booming in a puissant Germanic manner, I listen to the amazing music of JEAEGKB and thank Thomas Edison for his ingenuity. Oh wow. Where do I start in conveying the power and originality of this wildly talented quartet of musicians: Joe Eclectic, finger harp; Picky Smith, pickhorn;

Sarah Sane, lead vocals and electric kazoo; Mudhole Higgins, tom-tom. There is such unbridled JOY here in these microgrooves, such elan, such vigour, such soulfulness, that it makes me wet my pants in sheer excitement! Far out, as John Sebastian can be heard to say 500 times a day.

Well, let's start with the first side of the record. Okay? You put the record on the turntable, settle back and after a couple of minutes you begin to hear this very faint chanting from what seems to be thousands of miles away. As the minutes wear on it gradually becomes louder and you can make out the words, "Left... right... left... right..." over and over. This is chanted a capella (not a type of marijuana; it means unaccompanied by instruments or something like that). Then you notice suddenly that "Left" is coming out of the left speaker and "Right" is coming out of the right speaker. Oh wow! This goes on for all of side one. As the song, entitled "Left and Right", draws to a close the voices once again fade, until nothing can be heard but the lonely scratching of the stylus in the groove.

All in all, this twenty-seven minute song is an uplifting thing, a truly cleansing experience. It leaves you purged, spent, wiped out, wasted. You are hesitant to move on to side two, for what could top this innovative song, this song where the stereo effects are an integral part of the music, a functional, meaningful thing? You also wonder what would happen if you listened to this song on earphones with the phones reversed on your head so the "Left" comes out of the right channel and the "Right" comes out of the left. Would it destroy the meaning of the song? Or would it give it a new meaning altogether, as valid in its way as the meaning of the song as it stands? These things pass through one's mind. Not to mention wondering what the quadrasonic version might be like.

On to side two. "Fuck Off" starts out the side, a song addressed to "All you palefaced leaders, / You dirty nasty sacrificial breeders". Sung by Sarah in the highest part of her 13-octave voice (your tweeters will have a field day!), it indicts every Oppressor who has ever lived, lives, or will live. "Whaddaya think, with all your horrid crimes you'll end up in Heaven? / Why, I haven't believed that since I was seven." Mudhole lays down a mordant beat on his tom-tom, Picky plays a fantastic pickhorn solo (the pickhorn is a cross between an alto sax, a trombone, a harmonica and a refrigerator; it is made out of biodegradable plastic and costs around \$15). And Joe himself (who writes all the songs on this album) plays Bartok quotes on finger harp. "God Is A Head" is a Mudhole excursion with all sorts of multi- and counter-rhythms emerging from his tom-tom (which he says he bought for 56 cents from Woolworth's when he was nine years old). Sarah blows some downhome kazoo, using her wahwah pedal to demonstrate the gulf separating the acoustic kazoo player from one who has mastered the very difficult electric instrument.

There are thirty-three other songs on side two, none of them lasting longer than a minute, most going around thirty seconds, but the musical density of these songs is incredibly high. There are all sorts of little goodies, such as Sarah's orgasmic squeal on "Let's Go Get The Rat", Joe's scream of agony on "Birdshit Blues" and Picky Smith's version of a Bach prelude played backwards as background to Mudhole's moans of need on "Psychedelic Polka".

This is a fantastic recording. If you don't rush out right now and buy it you are an enemy of the people.

JB: Hey, yeah, that's cool! What a trip! Jeez, I gotta flash that one's headed for a Hugo next year for sure! And that Sarah Sane - man! she just zapped me right outa my skull! Like, she's really got it together! Wow! ... What the devil am I saying? Reprinted (thanks, Gary) from Everything is Everything no.1.

AM I STILL TALKING TO MY FRIENDS?

In the next issue of This Isn't SF COMMENTARY (which will not be published, owing to the imminent Australian Senate Select Committee appointed to inquire into the takeover bid by Ansett Transport Industries for the Senate's sitting day and night for fifteen weeks, requiring my attendance at work for eighteen hours per day) you can read Bruce Gillespie's definitive essay on the influence of Bernard-Francois Balzac's "Memorandum on the Scandalous Disorders brought about by Young Girls being Betrayed and Left Entirely Destitute" on the fiction of Volsted Gridban; Franz Rottensteiner discussing, in his inimitably light-hearted manner, the role of science fiction in contemporary Tadzhikistan culture; someone whose name I've just forgotten momentarily reviewing a film, the title of which just escapes me, by a director I've never heard of; and a 48-page summary by Leigh Edmonds of the delights of Benjamin Britten's "Rape of Lucretia". This issue will be sumptuously - nay, mouth-wateringly! - unillustrated by Alicia Austin, Jack Gaughan, Wm Rotsler, Richard Bergeron, Dimitrii Razuvaev and Salvador Dali. Order your copy now!

I'm not sure how it has come about, but in the eight weeks I have been in Canberra (you did notice the change of address, I trust) I seem to have published an average of one fanzine per week, which is utterly absurd. This goes some way towards explaining why the thirty-eight cartons in my garage are still not entirely unpacked. The books, fortunately, are now shelved, but there seem to be about eight cartons of papers and fanzines - and somewhere in there are the article by John Litchen about his libidinous adventures in the Trobriand Islands (which I fully intended to publish in this issue), Ursula Le Guin's reply to Peter Roberts and Paul Wheelahan (ditto) and all sorts of other fascinating goodies. The bulk of the book about John Campbell is somewhere in those unpacked boxes, too, dammit.

Oh well. Last year, around August I think, Ursula mentioned that her husband, Professor Charles Le Guin had it in mind to introduce a course in Australian literature, culture and &c to the unwitting students at Oregon State. I whipped off a brief note - about ten thousand words, more or less - outlining the books about Australia worth looking at, and a few days ago was delighted to learn that Prof Le Guin has gone ahead despite this. Ursula writes: "I think he and the students are having a good time with it: they are kind of working it out as they go." ((Which is a pretty good Australian attitude, for a start.)) "It is not a lecture course but a Joint Project. It began with rather a bang, as he found a very good anthropological movie and a good record of Aboriginal music. The movie involved a circumcision rite, and I guess all the boys in the class sat with their legs crossed for several days after." And so they should. I don't quite know why, but I am reminded by this of a lecture way back in '57 or '58 when a fellow theological student - Ken Hank, it was - utterly floored our lecturer by asking what the priests did with the foreskins afterwards. It also reminds me of Lee Harding's story about the Japanese convert to Judaism, who by dint of much dedication and faith became a Rabbi - but you would have to hear Lee tell the story; it loses in transcription.

Terry Jeeves, in Erg #38, suggests strongly that there should be more sf in prominent places, such as Hansard. There's not much I can do about the British Hansard, but I assure him I am doing my bit to inject a little sf into the Australian Hansard. Mind you, the scope is limited: I can't very well have Senator Mulvihill saying, "Honourable Senators will be aware, of course, that Robert Heinlein made this very point in his well-known novel..." nor Senator Dame Nancy Buttfield quoting J. G. Ballard in support of her opinions on the Repatriation Act, but I do my best. Nearly lost my job last week when I had someone mentioning Takumi Shibano in a discussion on Japan. (Someone higher up than me felt it was much more likely that Mr Sato was being referred to. That's the way it goes.)

Last Saturday's "Australian" was something of a collectors item, since it was produced entirely without benefit of proof-readers. (The paper has been having troubles lately with its readers.) Apart from a headline about "potrests" somewhere or other, it didn't seem much different from usual, but I didn't read it closely. Certainly there was nothing comparable with that delightful item reproduced in Scythrop 22.

I seem to be running out of space. Just room to mention that Creath Thorne (1022 College Ave, Columbia, Missouri 65201 USA) would appreciate seeing Australian fanzines. And that's all for this issue, folks. Keep in touch - Australia in 75 - Porter for DUFF - &c.

