

L O  
L O  
A O N  
B V S  
B R L  
R O  
I T  
S  
1  
1

## Contents

### Balloons Over Bristol 11 24th March 1997

Editorial . . . . .	3
Pete Binfield	
E-mails From America - The Christina Chronicles	
Happy Birthday America . . . . .	5
Readercon . . . . .	9
Journeys Into Sound . . . . .	13
Simon Lake	
La Vache C'est Morte - A Filmscript . . . . .	15
D. Hunter Bell	
Halfway Up The Stairs - The Miss Lee Letters Part 7 . . . . .	24
Tim Goodrick	
The Letters Columns . . . . .	33
Fans . . . . .	33
Postcards from Burnham . . . . .	33
Dr Who . . . . .	34
Fanzines etc.. . . . .	34
Miscellany . . . . .	37
Fannish Miscellany . . . . .	37
Eastercon (1996) . . . . .	39
Music . . . . .	40
The Back Page . . . . .	42
Steve Brewster	

Balloons Over Bristol 11 is a Bristol Group production. Until Christina returns the editorial address is: Pete'n'Sue Binfield, 160 Wells Road, Bristol, BS4 2AG.

All contributions are copyright the original authors.

## Editorial

I have a theory about fandom. Previously this was half-baked. Writing this fanzine has finished it off with a nice brown glazed top and gravy.

SF Fandom, apart from being in itself the ultimate clique, is composed of numerous smaller cliques, largely separated from each other and with only very occasional overlap. I shall explain, but first, a history lesson.....

Myself and assorted friends have attended numerous conventions (and just about every mainland Eastercon, except of course Docklands), been heavily involved in two University SF Groups, and Sue and I have organised a Con (OK, it was a small one, but we did have Colin Greenland (Hi Colin) and Andrew J Wilson). Despite this, I do not know the vast majority of people who have contributed to this issue and, I suspect, they do not know me (nor 90% of my friends). It is to this disenfranchised majority that I spread my arms and say "Welcome to the wonderful world of Sub-Fandom". And so, the history lesson:

Although I attended Worldcon at Brighton, my first serious taste of fandom was as a student. The Manchester University SF group (a.k.a. WARPED) had a reasonable sized core of dedicated fans, and a few postgrads old enough to be almost past it. We stuck together and we partied together. We went to cons together and we sat and we drank together. We absolutely did not go to programme items and nor did we, as a rule, mix with anyone. As Bridget points out (see the Letters Column) a lot of this attitude could be put down to Steve Mowbray, and, I submit, to a lesser extent to Tony-happy-Keen and Neal Tringham. It was at this time that I met Sue, as well as various assorted luminaries (all of which we still party with) such as (in stream of consciousness order) Mark Slater, Elaine Coates, Marek Kukula, Chris Cowan, Chris Kelly, Ian Brooks, Barbara (now) Brooks, Alison Murphy, Paul Blair, Stuart Johnson, Steve Johnson. Towards the end of this period we fell in with a Rocky Horror fan named Bridget Hardcastle. Most of the original floozies have been married off - Mark now lives with Elaine, Ian married Barbara and I married Sue. Alison remains available (enquiries at the bar). We remain in almost daily e-mail contact and trade insults wherever possible. Each year's Eastercon is the one annual event where we can almost guarantee that we will meet up, sit around and get drunk and reminisce on the good old days. Just last month many of us attended the Warped Tenth Reunion Party in Manchester with the current brood (a bacchanalian orgy of puke and drink), such is the sense of continuity.

As time moved on we left our SF roots and moved on to bigger and better things. The PhD take-up rate of original members was frightening and at one point Sue and I found ourselves in deepest darkest Aberdeen - myself doing a holography PhD and Sue doing her own inimitable thing. One of the first things we did, on Fresher's day (well, Fresher's 4 hours really), was look for the SF Soc. Finding none we resolved to start our own and for this we can lay unanimous blame on Stuart Johnson and Paul Blair for getting us both drunk and enthusiastic.

The result of the new Aberdeen Science Fiction and Fantasy Society was a whole new clan of SF Friends, amongst which we could list Doug 'Ranger' Bell, Donald Baillie, Mike MacLean, Rory Dock, Lesley Irving, Katherine Kershaw, James Turner, Ian Broadhead, Anthony Kear the Beardy Weirdy, Ben Walmisley, Martin Young, Malcolm Hutchison, Karl Thurlgood and Martin and Helen Jones. One of our greatest moments was an organized minibus trip to Eastercon at Blackpool (the name of which escapes me, the one with the fireworks). Fifteen people in two rooms and the introduction of a whole new group to con-life.

At one point, in an attempt to meet *Real People*, we started the Aberdeen Area SF Group which met once a month in the function room of the Blue Lamp. Quizzes were a regular feature and for this group we owe much thanks to Mike MacLean.

Sadly, it all had to come to an end and we left Aberdeen (leaving Aberdeen was not the problem, just the groups). With a brief spell in Chester, Sue and I then moved to Bristol. For six months we looked in vain for a local group and almost considered starting a new one but we held back, hoping in vain for someone else to take the initiative. We asked around in local shops, we even attended a local Star Trek con, but they all knew nothing. Eventually one of our friends whom most of you probably do know, Neal Tringham, told us that he knew a couple of people from Bristol and would introduce us at Worldcon. This he did, and that was how we met up with Christina and the Bristol crowd. Despite considering ourselves to be reasonably well plugged into the SF community we hadn't met any of them before (far less heard of them). It did turn out, however, that Bridget was a mutual friend.

And this brings me to my point. We could have gone on quite (un)happily in Bristol never meeting Christina or the whole crowd (well, handful would be more accurate) that is The Bristol Group. Eventually we would have started our own group and continued along our parallel stream of Sub-Fandom, happily oblivious to everyone else. No doubt, everyone else would have done the same. To this day, when at cons, we still mix preferentially with our own crowds and have never heard of, far less met, most of the people who have contributed letters to this issue.

Just how many sub-fandoms are there out there? How many enclosed cliques of friends, turning up year after year to Eastercon and never mixing, happy with their own company? How many university groups come and go? I suspect there are quite a few. The Lost Tribes of Fandom.

In fact, the whole fanzine culture, which we seem to have been sucked into has barely touched us. What is a loc? Who cares about APA's? Who are these people? What, exactly, are they talking about? This is not a reflection on the people, more on the fact that this particular world seems to have passed us by. We realise that what you hold in your hands is probably not what you were expecting but hey, you cant keep everyone happy. We've never done a fanzine before, hardly even read any. We have, however, been 'in' fandom (not necessarily yours) for a long time.

I am sure Christina entrusted BoverB to us, because she thought we'd actually do it. Well, we're at least six months late we know, but here it is. Love it or loathe it, it's here.

---

In this issue we have two "E-mails from America", from World-Globe-Trotter-Christina, where Christina recounts the fun she had during American Independence Day and also at Readercon. Next up, we have the ever popular music feature from Simon Lake, "Journey's Into Sound" and a rather surreal filmscript by an upcoming young writer, who I'm sure you'll all love, D Hunter Bell. Next, something which I am certain will come as a shock to you all, the last instalment of the "Miss Lee Letters" and penultimately we have the Letters Columns. Finally and by all means leastly we have "The Back Page" by Steve Brewster.

Apologies all round for the length of this issue, I would like to say it was this long because we had been working on it for the last twelve months. Instead, I shall simply say that we had twelve months worth of material to squeeze in. Enjoy.

Pete Binfield 24/3/97

I'm sure that a lot of you will know that Christina has departed for a year long round the world sojourn. Just before she left she handed us a big pile and said "Here's BoverB", so in retaliation we demanded that she write us something. The following two articles are her 'Postcards from the World' (sent via e-mail).

### Happy Birthday America!

I've never been in America for the 4th July before, so I didn't really know what to expect and as the holiday approached, I felt increasingly alienated. For a start, the main non-financial drawback to not working is that you don't appreciate public holidays. To everybody else it was a welcome day off work; to me it was a day when the postman wouldn't call. Secondly, the day celebrated independence from the British, so wouldn't I come in for some hostility? "I just joke about being the enemy," advised Francis, a very American sounding Brit working in Boston. He didn't seem to have plans for celebrating Independence Day in any other way than recovering from a heavy work schedule before heading down to New York City, but did vaguely mention that there would be fireworks on the Charles River. My guide book also mentioned that the Boston Pops, Boston's outdoor light entertainment orchestra, did a concert on the 4th July. Piecing it together with the help of my trusty map of Boston, I figured out that I should head down to the portion of the Charles River with the Shell Hatch where the Boston Pops performed, some time in the evening and see what was going on.

When the 4th came round, it was one of those heavy thundery days that leave you feeling inert, and slightly depressed. After making some desultory attempt at writing in the morning, I found myself lying on the sofa in the afternoon, watching the storms out the window and listening to the radio. The radio was celebrating the birth of alternative music, which it had, somewhat arbitrarily to my mind, designated as 1982 (actually, I later found out, this was the year when this particular station started playing alternative music, so there was some kind of logic. But I'm used to dating alternative music from the birth of punk in the late '70s). So, there they were, playing a selection of music from the late 70s and early 80s, which, despite the frequent commercial breaks, I couldn't quite bring myself to turn off. Too many timebinding tunes from a happier portion of my past, when, like now, I seemed to be quite plugged in to the music scene: Talking Heads, Art of Noise, XTC, Sex Pistols, New Order, Eurythmics, Clash, Jonathan Richman, Patti Smith. My only disappointment was that the competition was too difficult for me - you had to name 3 tunes to win a CD of early 80s music, and I hoped that they might put on some tracks familiar to me but obscure to Americans. No such luck - was never into The Gang of Four and Church.

A month of listening to American radio has at least provided me with the answer to the question, frequently asked by Americans, what type of music do you listen to? (Kind of BritPop, I would say, leading them to enthuse about Oasis (though not Blur), which wasn't quite what I meant). Everything has to be branded here and all the radio stations have a niche, with its own name. For example, in the house where I'm staying, my hosts listen to something called Soft Jazz, which plays Sadé a lot, and another station (I haven't caught its category yet), that plays old Moody Blues tracks and other stuff which nowadays, I guess, we would find on Radio 2. I don't think it counts as Classic Rock, which presumably plays slightly harder stuff. On the Howard Stern show (breakfast time chat show), they were discussing how the radio station which they broadcast on switched to alternative rock about six months ago, causing the competing station, which used to have this niche, to switch back to Classic Rock,

which Howard's station used to play. And then they gradually began to swap their rosters of DJs to go with the switch. Weird. Anyhow, the music I listen to is, quite logically, called New Rock, subtitled 90's rock. This means the station can play quite a lot of Nirvana, even though it's not precisely new. It also mixes in last year's Elastica, Radiohead, Garbage, Nine Inch Nails and other 90s favourites, with a fairly repetitive diet of newer American sounds. Unfortunately, the DJs are very lax at naming the band, and only tend to do so when I already know who it is. But thanks to advertising, I have been able to work out that one of the tracks I like is from The Butthole Surfers and that the one which sounds a lot like Elvis Costello is in fact Superdrag. I have, however, drawn a blank on the novelty record, Teenage Guide to Popularity, which includes advice like "Make sure to keep your hair spotless and clean. Be sure to wash it at least every two weeks" and "Impose a one month limit on dating" (which, as one DJ pointed out, means you need only wash your hair twice during the whole time you're dating.) There's also a fair amount of Fugees, Metallica and Soundgarden, the new Patti Smith, and Black Crowes. On this station, the commercials are run so that you get about 40 minutes of uninterrupted music, followed by 20 minutes of mainly commercials, plus a bit of music. This in fact makes it slightly easier to listen to than British commercial radio as I can always put on a cassette for the segment when the ads come on.

Newberry Comic's Alternative top ten Boston WBCN 5th July

10. .Sponge - That's ecstatic
- 9 Sub- Nirvana Main chorus line : I don't know what's real without you.
- 8 Goo Goo Dolls - Long Way Down
7. Soundgarden - This is burden in my hand
6. Primitive Radio Gods - Standing by a broken down phone booth
5. Nada Surf - Teenage popularity
4. Alice In Chains - Again
3. No doubt spider webs - Now (?)
2. Butthole Surfers - Pepper
1. Rage Against the Machine - Pocket full of shells

*(See what I mean about lack of info - they didn't even say what the no. 9 track was. And I'm not 100% sure I caught some of the others. But looks like I have my first clue for the Teenage Popularity Guide - I'll have to check out whether there exists any such band as Nada Surf!)*

But back to the 4th July. After all the storms, the skies cleared and I finally summoned up the energy to haul myself out of the sofa and get the bus timetable. Careful study revealed that they would be operating a Sunday timetable rather than a Saturday one, which was good news as the last bus out of Harvard Square on a Saturday is at ten o'clock. So much for late nights out on Saturdays! Presumably it's so that the bus drivers can get up for church on Sunday (very big round here, I've been told) . So I went out to give the guinea pigs and rabbits their evening treats (today lettuce and some left over peach), packed the map and headed into town on the 6.10 bus. Belmont was eerily quiet. Obviously everybody was out having their barbecues. But the bus turned up on time and a few people looking equally disenfranchised as myself (old ladies, black families) got on. When we reached Harvard Square I had a quick look round to see if anything was going on, but it looked much as usual, except seedier, with less students and more crusties. I decided to head on towards downtown Boston, via the subway. As we crossed the bridge between Cambridge and Boston I saw that

the river was full of boats and the banks thronged with people - aha, so there is something going on! Signs in the station directed to the Esplanade and Fireworks, so I knew I was on the right track. I followed people across a bridge, past concession stands for soda, hot dogs, doughnuts, T-shirts with American flags on them, and over an amazingly car-free two lane highways. There still seemed to be some places to sit, but I thought I would wander around and see what was happening a bit more before I found a spot. I soon realised why there had still been space - these people were on the wrong side of the Shell Hatch, so even though there was a good view of the boats, they wouldn't see anything of the concert. Naturally, on the right side of the Hatch, all the territory was staked. Police stood on the bridges across the lagoon, where a happy few were rowing up and down in dinghies or moored in small yachts. Here the ground was pretty muddy too, and I realised that I should really have brought something to sit on to stake a bit of territory of my own. Beyond the refreshment stand, where the Shell Hatch was virtually invisible, the crowd thinned out and I found somewhere to sit, in amidst families under awnings, couples lying together on ground sheets, friends sharing cobs of freshly cooked corn. No-one seemed to notice me, the enemy, infiltrating their camp.

It was about an hour before any action was due and the bad news was that there was a shower of rain passing through Brookline, which would be hitting us in about two minutes. Sure enough within a few minutes, all the umbrellas were up (another piece of vital equipment I'd neglected to bring), not to mention the umbrella hats, caps with umbrella style tops, decorated with the American flag. The shower turned into an hour of on/off rain. I sat on my piece of ground getting gradually damper, noticing that each time I took out my book to read, it started to rain again. At eight, we were to be joined by live TV, and were all instructed to stand while the American colours were brought out, so that all of America could see us showing our respect. Then just as it seemed that something might be about to happen, the presenter announced a hold ("Like in baseball," he said) as there was more rain coming in. "We're going to remain standing while we retire the colors," he told us. Since I couldn't even see the colors, I had to guess when they'd been suitably retired. The news was that we might be delaying start by another 15 minutes. I was beginning to go off this 4th July business all over again. People near me prophesied darkly: "It'll be 'Sorry folks, come back on Saturday.' You'll see." I almost began to wish it would be. It was a bit like some of those early morning balloon fiestas I've turned out to in Bristol when there's too much wind for the balloons to take off - except without any friends or champagne picnic to ameliorate the experience. (I wasn't even clear if alcohol was allowed on the Esplanade. I definitely passed through one area saying alcohol free zone, and also couldn't make out whether the unit labelled alcohol disposal unit, was for confiscation purposes or just to collect the bottles. In any case, everyone around me seemed to be drinking sodas.) But the presenter came back on speaker to tell us that the orchestra were rearranging themselves to get out of the rain, squashing in to share music stands, and other such feats of endurance in an attempt to stop us leaving. Then the conductor, Keith Lockhart, came up to say they would do everything they could to get the show on the road. "You stay, we play," he announced, quoting, apparently, the watchword of his predecessor from the '30s, Arthur Fielder.

Finally the colors were wheeled out again (or whatever they do with colors) and 13 year old George Wesley Jr (credentials: professional singer since age 3, and sang at the memorial service for the Oklahoma bombing) came out on stage to sing *The Star Spangled Banner*. The crowd around me stood reverently to attention. Then it was on

with the show at last - an appropriate word since the music was mainly showtime classic - Gershwin, Coleman/Fields, Mancini. Bebe Neuwirth of Cheers fame came up and sang (Oh, Lilith! Pity I couldn't see the stage). The first half of the set ended, bizarrely with God Bless America, followed by a song from Disney's The Lion King. Actually, I missed most of that because I misguidedly decided to buy a hot dog and then experimented with getting nearer the stage, ending up in a part of the crowd where you could move neither forwards nor backwards, see slightly and hear virtually nothing. I went back to my original place by the speaker where at least I could hear (and sit).

Mercifully, the intermission was short (probably catching up after the delay). The second half of the set included the "Patriotic Sing Along", featuring America the Beautiful, Yankee Doodle and God Bless America. I suppose you could think of it as being a bit like the last night of the proms, except for a suspicion that it was all being taken quite seriously. The orchestra ended up with the 1812 Overture, accompanied by fireworks. A real relief after such classics as Never Never Land, from Peter Pan. But over all too soon. Two minutes of good stuff, compared to two hours of misery was not a very good ratio, I decided, exaggerating abominably.

For an encore, the orchestra did the Mission Impossible theme, which was kind of fun, and then after a break, the fireworks began in earnest. Billed as the biggest fireworks display in the world, they seemed quite tame at first. Just one type of firework, followed by another of the same, but maybe in a different colour. After a bit of this, I began walking back towards the T. But as I crossed the bridge, the fireworks began to build into a better display. It was quite impressive, watching all the people standing quietly by the river below me, the fireworks exploding in the air above and the buildings of downtown Boston all around. Almost the sense of wonder I had been looking for the whole time. I watched for a bit longer, until they began letting off fireworks that I couldn't see below the treeline, then decided that given the number of people in the crowd, I really ought to get to the T, before everybody else converged on it. But which way? I wasn't sure how I had come, so just drifted along with the trickle of people leaving, eventually ending up at Arlington station ("What's with you people," said the policeman on the gate. "It's still going on.") Arlington is on the green line, which has old fashioned coaches that look more like trams than underground trains. I had to go back a couple of stops to change on to the red line, where I was still one stop ahead of where people would be getting on from the fireworks. By the time the train pulled into the Charles River stop, I could see huge lines of people, being held back by the police so that they wouldn't crush each other getting on the trains. And even more people got on at the other side of the river. At Harvard Square, I was just in time for the bus to Belmont, travelling back in the companionable atmosphere you get when you know you've been to the same event (some were still wearing those fluorescent necklaces they were selling at the show.) At least it felt like I had participated in something, even if I was the enemy and hadn't been invited to any barbecues.

When I turned on the TV back home, David Letterman was just coming on, introducing himself as America's favourite founding father and super patriot. Somehow this summed it all up. Super-patriotism.

"Happy 220th birthday, America!" he announced.

**Christina Lake**



## Readercon

Like a true 90's virtual chick, I got the gen on Readercon 8 from the Internet, that first resort of the deficient in social connections. Guests of honour, William Gibson, it said (cool!) and Larry McCaffery. Who? Anne's first born offspring? No, a university critic in post modernist literary theory. Recommended reading : "Storming the Reality Studio : A casebook of cyberpunk and post-modern science fiction" and "After Yesterday's Crash ; The Avant-Pop anthology"

The directions were reassuringly simple from Boston. As it was near and as this is my year for doing things I don't do in real life, I decided to drive to the convention on a daily basis to save on hotel bills (in real life I don't even possess a car; but my American alter-ego owns, bizarrely, a rather large Mercury Marquis). Which left me with the question - how to cope with a convention at which you know nobody and can't drink enough for that not to matter? In fact, I was expecting to know one or two people. A few fans from New York and John Clute, who was allegedly on the guest list. But this was a sercon event - serious and constructive criticism. I would simply read up on Mr McCaffery's literary theories, pack my horn-rimmed spectacles and sit in on the panels, trying to look intelligent.

So, the Friday afternoon of the con, I drove up to Westborough, Massachusetts, in my big American car, miraculously not getting lost. First news that greeted me - William Gibson had pulled out. Instead there would be a virtual Bill Gibson, represented unhappily, not by state of the art modem and PC, but a fax machine. Cyber-what?

The people at the convention all looked so familiar. But I was only recognising the fannish archetypes, because when I looked more closely you could see that they weren't Tim Illingworth or John Dallman, but some totally unknown Americans.

Out in the lobby, I did run into some people I knew, John Berry and Eileen Gunn from Seattle, along with Australians Valma Brown and Leigh Edmonds, whom I might or might not have met before in London. The convention, it seemed, was swarming with Australians. Valma and Leigh had almost failed to recognise fellow countryman Damien Broderick over breakfast. "He's got less hair," Valma explained, "and we haven't seen him for five years, and Leigh's hair's gone greyer too." Such identity crises notwithstanding, the Australians seemed to form a recognisable clique, which for want of a ghetto of my own, I fell into with grateful ease, bonding on mutual incomprehension of the American way of conventioning.

Not drinking turned out at this stage to be very easy. No-one was drinking. The bar was exuding loud disco music which effectively turned the adjacent areas, including all the comfy chairs in the lobby, into an exclusion zone. The only place to talk was the corridor. The only place to sit was the programme. Time to go hone my po-mo sensibilities and attend a panel, I decided. Did Teresa Nielsen-Hayden do a double take when I came into the programme room? I tried not to feel self-conscious and concentrate on our topic of discussion "The Failures of Ambition". It was weird. Samuel Delaney was up on the stage. I was surrounded by Americans. I couldn't hear properly because there was some kind of feedback loop on the microphones. I started having flashbacks to Intersection but at least the chairs were more comfortable than in

Hall 3. Delaney talked learnedly about 19th century novels, Dave Hartwell expressed flashes of inspiration and Teresa tried to fill in the gaps, but you could tell that they were all having difficulty warming to the topic. We had reached the stage of agreeing that Tolkien is ambitious but that Tolkien's imitators aren't, even though they're imitating an ambitious project when Delaney broke in with the concept of "Begeisterung". This was the word used by the German Romantics for the kind of amazement and beguilement they had with their own work and I knew in an instant why I was hardly writing fiction any more, I had lost that "Begeisterung". Both Teresa N-H and Hartwell seemed to recognise this phenomenon as editors of writers who lose their spark - perhaps it returns, perhaps it doesn't. So there we were, not quite deconstructing ambition, not quite reaching any conclusions on whether today's writer lacks ambition, but making connections.

The evening programming was running solidly from six through till nine, but I was starving. Snack food? Not a chance. Maybe we should visit the con suite, I suggested to Valma, remembering this rather civilised feature to American cons. "I wouldn't bother," said a passing Patrick Nielsen Hayden, "It will be full of boring people no-one knows." "Or it might not even be open," I said, scrutinising my programme information for opening hours. Valma decided to play her advantage as resident to retreat to her hotel room, whilst I did another circuit of the facilities - hucksters room, registration, noisy bar, restaurant, corridor, lobby - for some sign of action, before settling down on a sofa to read about Virtual Light and Avant Pop in the programme book.

Eight o'clock and time to see our remaining GoH in action. Or so I thought. Larry McCaffery wasn't even there. Probably out eating, or bonding with dragons or something. Leaving the panel without its theoretical head to chew at as it discussed the question of the next wave, or where to after cyberpunk. Damien Broderick had to step into the breach and read us some of his own critical theory, whilst Eileen Gunn maintained that she didn't believe in all the reality of these literary movements. A rather butch woman in black with very aggressive-looking legs, denounced cyberpunk as "so 80s" and began defining what age group you needed to be to write innovative science fiction, bandying around terms like boomer generation, generation X and destroying her critical credibility by inventing some kind of transitional generation just to allow her and her contemporaries to be hip too. At the other end of the panel, a quieter woman in her early twenties suggested that the new wave of writers weren't even writing novels - but interconnected stories, citing in evidence Maureen McHugh and Amy Tan. Paul Di Filippo said some entertaining stuff too, but damned if I can remember what.

By the end of the panel, Valma was as hungry as I had been two hours previously, and wondering why the Americans had been so callous as to programme all the way through dinner time. "I wish I'd brought sandwiches," I said gloomily as I waited in line for a place in the restaurant with Valma, Leigh, and Peter, yet another Australian, "we could always go somewhere else in my car." I pulled out the list of recommendations, but it all looked too confusing. Fortunately, a waiter emerged to seat us in time to prevent anyone taking me seriously.

"Why does the air-conditioning have to be so cold?" wondered Valma. Apparently we were in the coldest corner of the restaurant. I put on my jacket and Valma went back to her room to fetch the airline blanket she had acquired on her travels while Leigh

pumped Peter for the latest Ozzie football news. None of these manoeuvres induced the food to arrive. On the next table, Delaney et al were eating their way through piles of fried fish before finally our waiter took pity on us and brought over a basket of warm bread, which we devoured within minutes. "You won't want your food," Valma warned.

"I don't care."

The only Americans who ever understood mine and Lilian's yen to drink wine throughout our joint TAFF trip back in 1988 were John Berry and Eileen Gunn, everybody else seemed to prefer iced tea or diet coke. Not so the Australians. Just as the food arrived, Valma was struck by the revelation that we should have been drinking wine while we were waiting. Once broached, the idea somehow took root, and we ordered some with the food anyway (in spite of the Australian aversion to paying restaurant prices for wine when they are used to bringing in their own). John and Eileen also get on well with Australian fans.

By the time we'd been served, eaten, sorted out the bill and reassured our Brazilian waiter that we understood the proper 15% tipping protocol, the Meet the Pros party had been underway so long that I was afraid that all the pros might have gone to bed, or off to some even more exclusive party. But, no, the room was still bustling. Eileen Gunn gave me a suggestive line of text to put on my badge. Damien Broderick introduced me to a local Cambridge fan, Sheila Lightsay, who within five minutes had established that she already knew me from Amsterdam and offered me free space in her room if I wanted to stay over. I was slightly gobsmacked, but said that maybe I'd take her up on the offer for Saturday.

Sheila took Damien and me up to the Philadelphia room party to meet the free drinks. "I don't drink," she explained, "I'm just a clean-living yankee". Damien needed something to reset his circadian rhythms after the trip from Australia - "I wish they'd invent matter transporters." "But where's the joy of travel in that?" This was a few days before flight TWA 800 exploded over Long Island.

Back down in the bar, the disco had actually stopped and the convention had finally distilled down to the intimate social gathering you get when enough people have gone to bed that you can talk to anyone just because you're still awake. However, the barman must have seen that the convention was about to get interesting and announced firmly that the bar was closing. So that was that. Nothing to do but go to the car park and see if I could find my way home. After the obligatory detour via a part of Boston I never meant to see, I finally made it to bed by 3 am. Pretty good for a convention, and with no hangover to face in the morning.

The delights of the Saturday morning programme were not to be - in my case. I returned to the car park by 12.30, accompanied by pouring rain that was supposed to be the harbinger of the remains of Hurricane Bertha, star of TV and radio for about a week as it played Russian roulette with the East coast of America, before choosing to hit on the Carolinas.

Ever a sucker for literary theories, I rushed in to see the Transrealism panel. What is transrealism? The theory seemed to go that the real world is stranger than the fiction we invent, therefore if SF writers mix in bits of real life, then their work will be both more weird and end up with more psychological resonance. "But surely everyone does

that," said Eileen Gunn, ever the debunker of extravagant literary theories. Everybody except SF writers, the panel seemed to think. And besides it was a bit more complex than simply borrowing straight from life; it was a conscious stratagem. This time Larry McCaffery had made it to the panel, and his round boyish face was agleam with enthusiasm at the thought of all this theorising. James Morrow saw the panel more as an opportunity to hold up one of his books to the audience, even though he managed to invert the cover so that we couldn't see what it was called. Luckily his slightly serious accountant look was tempered by the glimpse of a small rat-tail of hair at the back which made you realise he was more transreal than real. Laurie Marks tried to establish whether transrealism could apply to fantasy. What about Tolkien? What about characters like Frodo who were clearly not real at all? That's not what Tolkien is about, it was decided. But no-one really wanted to run with the fantasy ball. How can you make unicorns real?

I was going to stay on for "Affirmative action and adventure: Women in SF", but Sheila intercepted me with the promise of a key to her room if I'd help her with restocking the Green Room. So we went up to the Con Suite which was not the scene of plague blight that Patrick Nielsen Hayden had promised. In fact, I was soon ensconced in a conversation about Gary Farber with Vicki Rosenzweig and Paula Liebermann who found the concept of FarberDay, and a fund to bring New York's ageing enfant terrible over to Novacon, as bizarre as I did. Sheila dragged me away, reminding me of my duties and it was down to the green room where people were talking about winter weather and freezing rooms, obviously swapping horror stories in readiness for the panel on "From Boredom to Horror". I rather liked the tag line in the programme "the boredom of the middle classes of the developed nations, particularly of the American middle class, is the most dangerous force in the world today." Unfortunately, the panellists liked it somewhat less than me; they didn't want to talk about the horrors of real life (transrealism?) but the horrors of horror fiction. Hal Clement admitted his inability to find the Cthulu-style-nameless-horror horrific and the panel only took off when someone came out with the factoid that the majority of horror fiction (80%? I can't remember the exact figure) is read by women. An editor of horror fiction in the audience bounced up and down in amazement, "I never knew." One of the writers explained how he had failed to sell one of his horror fiction books because it hadn't been recommended by a woman editor. Don D'Amassa mentally reconstructed his sales history, and realised that all his horror had been picked up by women editors. This little epiphany left the audience sceptical. Why was all horror fiction marketed with black covers and macho masculine images of the hard scare? It had all been a big mistake, we were told, and really, truly it was a female genre through and through (even if dominated by Stephen King et al.) I remain sceptical.

### Christina Lake

And that, I'm afraid to say, is where Christina's report abruptly ended. I don't know what has happened to the rest (possibly lost in cyberspace) but I'm sure she will fill us in on her return.

## Journeys Into Sound

Some months ago I was collared by the new editors of this esteemed fanzine and asked if perhaps I could write about some bands people might actually have heard of for my music column. Naturally I was rather taken aback. After all what's the point in writing about bands you've already heard of? I mean come on, you don't need me to tell you that Pulp are ACE and Blur are DULL - or that Oasis are, well ... Oasis. Yes, there is a new REM LP (*Ed: Looks like Simon uses a gramophone player*) and if you like REM then you probably knew that already. Otherwise you probably don't much care.

No really, until Kylie Minogue releases a new record or the ABBA reunion produces something concrete, you're just going to have to work out the popular stuff for yourself.

No, you have to look upon this column more as an educational piece, or perhaps a chance to venture into the unknown. None more so than this time around, as I bring to your attention possibly one of the most obscure records ever made. Yes its time to lift the lid on one of the ultimate cult LPs, 'I Hear a New World' by Joe Meek and the Blue Men.

Not that Joe Meek himself should be too obscure a name for the older readers amongst you. Most people probably remember the instrumental hit 'Telstar' which he wrote for his band the Tornados - as ubiquitous in its time as Robert Miles' 'Children' is today, but with the added bonus of being a fabulous record too. As a producer, Meek was also behind a whole string of hits for artists such as The Honeycombs, John Leyton and Mike Berry. On top of that he was also one of the pioneers of the independent scene when he walked out on his former employers, IBC, to set up his own studio and label (way back in the summer of 1959).

Sadly, for all the obvious musical talents that Meek possessed, his prolific work rate was tempered by bouts of depression and insecurity. There were several years of success at the start of the '60's, but as the decade wore on things rapidly started to go wrong for Joe Meek. The huge success of the Beatles signalled a new era where bands began taking much greater control over their careers. The days when the producer selected the songs and told the musicians what to play were numbered. Although Meek continued making records, the hits had dried up. He grew steadily more paranoid, becoming convinced that the major labels were sabotaging his career (literally sabotaging, as he believed people were coming into his studio and tampering with the equipment).

Joe Meek made the ultimate career move on February 3rd 1967 - exactly eight years on from the death of Buddy Holly - by shooting his landlady and then turning the gun on himself. At that time his career had reached rock-bottom and he was considered an anachronism in the flourishing new rock counter-culture.

But what about 'I Hear A New World' - conceived as the world's first concept LP? A bold (or perhaps foolhardy) idea in an area still dominated by three minute pop songs, you might predict it was the product of Meek's final months when things were spiralling rapidly out of control. In fact it was recorded back in 1960, just as Joe Meek's reputation was reaching its height. Envisaged by Meek as a way to show off the wonders of the newly developed Stereo sound, it was actually promoted as an outer space music fantasy.

Yes, this truly was a concept album. Meek himself described it as '*a picture in music of what could be up there in space*'. He even invented cute little creatures called Globbots, Sarooes and Dribcots to inhabit his vision of life in space. All very pulp SF, but then this

was 1960 and moon landings were still nearly a decade off. In fact, reading the detailed notes that accompany these songs (written by Meek and hilariously surreal) one can't help but think of US band the Residents whose Mole Trilogy seems to inhabit similar territory.

Of course, Joe Meek's distributors were none too keen on this collection of space age music that sounded so totally alien to anything else that was around at the time. Four songs from the project did make it onto an EP but even then it's believed that only 99 copies were ever pressed. The full set of twelve songs were certainly never given an official release.

Now, over thirty years later, the tapes have been dug up from the vaults and the whole thing lovingly packaged onto CD. The project's cult reputation has been fuelled over the years by numerous dodgy bootleg versions being circulated, but finally anyone can get hold of a copy. Was it Joe Meek's finest work? Probably not. A few songs are marred by some seriously dated vocal effects (something close to Pinky and Perky or those dreaded Smurfs), but thankfully the majority of tracks are instrumentals. There are some beautiful moments here, with Rod Freeman's Hawaiian guitar providing much of the magic, sounding something akin to Dick Dale being recorded in outer space. Perhaps best of all is the simple *otherness* of much of the music - similar to that produced by some of the German bands of the early '70s - that sounds so refreshing in comparison to the homogenised nature of most of today's music.

So, maybe it's not the greatest LP ever, but it certainly can claim to be the first concept album and it's a damn sight better than anything Yes, Pink Floyd or Genesis ever came up with.

*I Hear A New World - Joe Meek and The Blue Men - (RPM records - RPM 103)*

#### Other Music News ...

Regular readers of BoverB may remember that many months ago we somehow managed to talk our way onto the mailing list of a record promotion company. Surprisingly, despite the fact that we're not a music fanzine and we haven't even been in circulation for most of this (1996) year, the freebies still keep coming. Hey, I know I shouldn't complain, but you wouldn't believe how bad some of this stuff is. I mean we got a copy of the Black Crowes CD 'Three Snakes and One Charm' and it has to be the worst thing I've heard in years. I mean do we really need an Americanised, '90s version of Led Zeppelin? No, I didn't think so.

Elsewhere you'd be amazed at how many hopeful (hopeless?) bands there are out there trying to blag their fifteen minutes of fame with barely half an idea between them. If Fireside, tc:hug, H-Blockx, Silver Sun, Octopus or Super Deluxe turn out to be bigger than Oasis I'll personally eat my entire Scott Walker collection. Honourable exceptions go to Solar Racer for their spunky debut single and Jonny Polonsky for his cute cover of Nirvana's 'In Bloom'. Oh, and Olive produced a rather wonderful dance tune called 'Miracle' back in the summer. One of the group may once have been in Simply Red, but hey we all make mistakes sometimes.

Simon Lake

## LA VACHE, C'EST MORTE

a filmscript by  
D. Hunter Bell ©

### THE CAST

Jules - A young Frenchman  
Jim - Another young Frenchman, Jules' friend  
Nicole - A young Frenchwoman, Jules' girlfriend  
Une Vache - Rosebud, a friesan cow.

### LOCATION

Set amid the beautiful French countryside on a lovely, bright, fresh spring day.

### PLOT

This is a touching tale of love and betrayal between a man and a bovine beast. Our three friends arrive in the countryside to indulge in a spring picnic. A cow watches their merriment from a nearby field. After gorging themselves on the food, our friends notice the dairy beast and cruelly taunt it to death. Only afterwards does Jim realise the possibilities of the life he and the cow could have had together.

### STYLE

This film is a tribute to the great masters of the French New Wave. The music should be reminiscent of "Un Homme Et Une Femme". We should have long lingering shots during the dialogue, perhaps interspersed with handheld cinema verité style. Ideally this needs to be filmed in very coarse grained 16mm.

### FADE IN

MAIN TITLE: LA VACHE, C'EST MORTE

EXT. JULES' MOVING CAR - DAY

JULES is driving his car, a 2CV, through the country lanes on a bright spring day. We can hear joyful music similar in style to the 'dabba-dabba-dah' soundtrack used in "Un Homme Et Une Femme".

CUT TO:

INT. JULES' MOVING CAR - DAY

In the car we can see JULES behind the steering wheel. He is a young Frenchman in his mid twenties. Beside him, in the passenger seat, is his girlfriend NICOLE, 23. Behind

them is their best friend JIM. Like Jules, Jim is in his mid twenties. Everyone is laughing and joking, obviously enjoying such a beautiful day.

CUT TO:

EXT. JULES' MOVING CAR - DAY

The car continues its merry way down the roads of rural France.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BEAUTIFUL FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Below us extend some fantastic springtime country scenes. We can see woods, streams, hills and most importantly meadows full of grazing cattle.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COWFIELD - DAY

A picturesque rural scene with a meadow full of happy Friesans grazing away.

CU on one particular milk-bearing beast,

LA VACHE  
Chew, Chew, Chew, Chew

CUT TO:

EXT. A PARKING PLACE BY A FIELD - DAY

Jules pulls his car up into the parking place. Out hop the three merry souls, laughing and joking with each other all the time. While Jules locks up, Jim takes a TRAVEL RUG out of the boot, whilst Nicole fishes a PICNIC BASKET out. They make their way through the gate beside the parking place out into the French countryside.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RIVERBANK - DAY

Our three friends make their way down a small but steep slope towards a wooded glade beside a stream. In the distance we can see a cow field. Jim throws down the rug and smooths it out on the ground. All three sit down, Nicole placing the picnic basket between them. Jules leaps to his feet clutching his backside. Frantically he pulls back the rug to discover a ROCK. Jim and Nicole laugh.

JULES  
Non.

SUBTITLE: No.



JULES  
(continuing)  
NON! NON! NON! NON!

SUBTITLE: No! No! No! No!

Jules throws the rock into the stream, before sitting down. All three friends laugh again.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COW FIELD - DAY

Our cow is completely oblivious to all the fun that is going on. She just continues chewing, not even recognising us.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RIVERBANK - DAY

Nicole reaches into the picnic basket and pulls out a CHEESE.

CU on the cheese.

JULES  
Un fromage!

SUBTITLE: A cheese!

Nicole takes a hefty bite out of the cheese and passes it around. Reaching into the picnic basket Jim takes out a CHICKEN LEG. He is very suprised to find it there.

CU on the chicken leg.

JIM  
Un poulet!

SUBTITLE: Wow, chicken!

Once again the food is bitten into before being offered to Jim and Nicole. Jules reaches into the basket and removes a FRENCH LOAF.

CU on the FRENCH LOAF.

JULES  
Une baguette!

Jules vigorously attacks the loaf with his mouth before passing it to Nicole and Jim.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COWFIELD - DAY

Our bovine heroine is still chewing her cud.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RIVERBANK - DAY

Having demolished the first course of their meal, the three friends are sitting back, relaxing.

JULES

Buuuuuurp!

SUBTITLE: Buuuuuuurp!

JIM

Buuuuuurp!

SUBTITLE: Buuuuuuurp!

NICOLE

Oui, c'est bon.

SUBTITLE: Yes, I enjoyed that.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COWFIELD - DAY

The cow pauses from her grass. She turns her head slowly and looks towards us.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RIVERBANK - DAY

Meanwhile back at the meal, Nicole pulls an APPLE from the picnic basket.

CU on the apple,

NICOLE

Une pomme!

SUBTITLE: An apple!

Like before, she bites into it before giving her chums the rest of the fruit. Jim takes a POTATO from the basket. He looks confused.

JIM  
(unsure)  
Eh..eh..une pomme de terre.

SUBTITLE: Oh, a potato.

He takes a bite out of it, but spits it out violently. Jim holds up the vegetable for his friends to see.

CU on the bitten potato.

JIM  
Eeeaaaargghh!

SUBTITLE: I don't like that.

Jim throws the tattie away. Jules reaches into the basket and pulls out a FISH. He is not convinced. All three look disgusted.

CU on the fish.

JIM  
Un poisson!

SUBTITLE: A Fish!

They all look at each other, confused, and with more than a touch of repulsion on their faces.

ALL  
(disgusted)  
Non, non, non, non, non.

SUBTITLE: No, no, no, no, no.

Jim throws the fish into the stream.

CU on Jules.

JULES  
Buuuuuurp!

SUBTITLE: Buuuuuuurp!

CUT TO:

EXT. A COWFIELD - DAY

The cow is still staring at us.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RIVERBANK - DAY

Jim leaps to his feet. He points into the distance as if he has seen something.

JIM  
Une mouton, c'est un mouton!

SUBTITLE: A sheep, it's a sheep!

The other two join him. At first they don't see it, but after a while Nicole does, and it's not a sheep.

NICOLE  
Non, non, c'est une vache.

SUBTITLE: No, it's not. It's a cow.

All three of them burst out laughing. They can hardly control themselves at the sight of the cow.

JIM  
Oui, c'est une vache, haw, haw, haw.

SUBTITLE: A cow!

They fall to the ground, laughing and rolling about. It looks as if our friends are going to wet themselves soon.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COWFIELD - DAY

The cow looking at us does not know what's going on.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RIVERBANK - DAY

The three kids are still pissing themselves with laughter. Jules struggles to his feet clutching his stomach.

JULES  
C'est une vache! Haw, haw, haw.

SUBTITLE: A cow!

Jules falls to the ground in hysterics.

NICOLE

Elle est une vache!

SUBTITLE: She's a cow!

JIM

Oui, c'est une vache. La vache c'est Rosebud!

SUBTITLE: Yes, it's a cow called Rosebud!

All continue laughing and rolling about on the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COWFIELD - DAY

The cow is still staring at us.

CUT TO:

EXT, A RIVERBANK - DAY

Continued rolling laughing French folk.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COWFIELD - DAY

The field still contains a bewildered bovine beast.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RIVERBANK - DAY

Still laughing picnickers.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COWFIELD - DAY

The cow looks at us with utter dejection on its face.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RIVERBANK - DAY

Whilst our friends are still laughing at the poor beast we hear the sound of something not quite right.

ROSEBUD (O.S.)  
(distressed)

Le moo!

SUBTITLE: Moo!

O.S. a loud thud, probably sounding like a heartbroken cow dropping dead.

At first nobody notices anything wrong, they are still too busy laughing. Nicole is the first to realise something is wrong. She sits up and looks at the field.

NICOLE  
La vache...la vache c'est morte!

SUBTITLE: The cow is dead!

Jules and Jim don't realise that she isn't joking.

NICOLE  
Non! La vache c'est morte!

SUBTITLE: No, the cow is dead!

Both sit up. They wipe the tears from their eyes, before standing up to see. Sure enough the cow is dead.

JIM  
(upset)  
Non, Rosebud!

SUBTITLE: No, Rosebud!

Jules and Nicole look at each other.

JULES  
Oui Jim, la vache c'est morte.

SUBTITLE: Yes Jim, she's dead.

CU on Jim's shell-shocked face.

JIM  
Rosebud!

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN

INT. JIM'S FLAT - NIGHT

Jim is standing in a large bay window looking out at us. It's raining quite heavily. Nicole is just behind him. Jules enters through a door in the faraway wall. Nicole watches him enter, then turns back to watch Jim. Jim continues his staring.

JIM

Il pluet!

SUBTITLE: It's raining.

Nicole walks up and puts her arm around Jim.

NICOLE

Oui Jim. Il pluet!

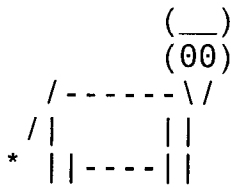
SUBTITLE: Yes Jim. It's raining.

CU on Jim's unhappy face through the rainy window.

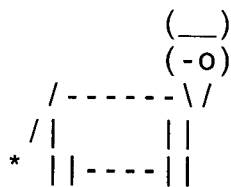
FADE TO BLACK

TITLE: Fin

The happy dabba-dabba-dah music fades in.



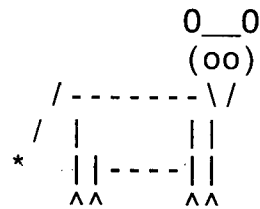
Cow with Glasses



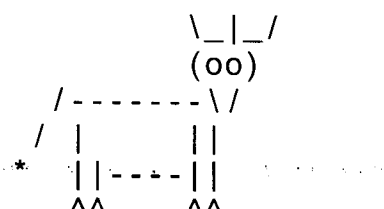
Flirtatious cow (winking)



Cow after pulling an all-nighter



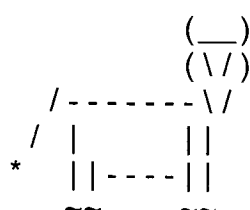
Cow at Disneyland



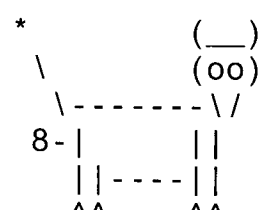
Cow visiting the Statue of Liberty



Scottish Cow playing bagpipes



Cow from Beijing



Wind-up Flying Cow

## Halfway Up The Stairs - The Miss Lee Letters

### Part 7

This is difficult. With Christina on her World Tour, a long time has elapsed since I wrote Part 6. The new editors, Pete'n'Sue Enterprises™, have not yet mastered the art of the Nag - it needs far more effort than just coming down to the pub occasionally and asking for articles. There needs to be melodrama, anguish and subtle threats to one's continued existence. Or did I just imagine that that was how Christina worked it?

I will be attempting to finish the series with this installment so there may not be much room for my interjections (some would say thankfully).

I won't pretend that the Miss Lee Letters have a complex story arc, but new readers may feel as though they are trying to fathom Babylon 5's 'War Without End' Part Two not having seen any other episodes at all. Miss Lee was an oldish lady, living in a flat below mine. She pushed letters under my front door and everything you read here is true. The letters are reproduced verbatim, with occasional excision of matters relating purely to the repair and maintenance of the flats.

*First Floor Flat  
3<sup>rd</sup> June 1987*

*Dear Mr. Goodrick,*

*My soap container with soap inside \_\_ was taken from where I placed it yesterday\_\_ I was in all day yesterday \_\_ so no person could get in from the outside side. It is a white transparent plastic container and ridged pattern \_\_ also I have scratched my name in several places. I am wondering if the lodger staying with you (since Dr. Howe's time) has taken this as a joke or anyone else? Some young men like to play tricks. I think you should ring up Builders to give an estimate for doing roof and tiles. \_\_ It would be better for you to 'phone them really.*

*I often carry my soap dish container with me in my pocket & take it from kitchen to bathroom and bathroom to kitchen \_\_ Before now it has fallen out of my pocket & on to the floor. I have had it for a long time and like to keep my things. I sometimes come across it (after a day of looking around) in an unexpected place. I do hope I shall find it. I like my things but hate other peoples. That is as it should be. I consider you work very hard and do not get much time for shopping. If you like I will get you a Tablet of Soap a week if my soap case turns up. With best wishes. In tearing haste.*

*From. Miss Lee*

As I said last time, Dr. Howe was the previous owner of my flat. He never had a lodger. I never had a lodger. There was more about the builders in the next letter but

---

Sorry about this Tim, but I'm revising my opinion on the Miss Lee book. Its all gone a bit too far now, and the sameness of these sad complaints is blunting some of the surrealism of the earlier letters.  
Steve Jeffery, 21st April 1996



this time I've left it out. I kept it in the previous letter because it seemed so incongruous in the middle of all the stuff about the soap.

*First Floor Flat  
9<sup>th</sup> June 1987*

*Dear Mr. Goodrick,*

*My light in hall was on at 5 am today — Perhaps it was the hall floor flat people. I am still hoping to come across my plastic white soap container — I was in all day at the time it was taken. The prices of everything keep soaring, so I resent having things taken even underclothes which are so expensive to buy. This part of Clifton has changed considerably in the last 20 years. The Hall Floor Flat people have bought a house I believe — Have you heard about it? I am still hoping to get an all electric Flat — In great haste. With good wishes*

*From Miss Lee.*

Ah, the joys of buying a house. And the even greater joys of selling. I had put my flat on the market earlier in the year but no-one showed any interest in it. I'm glad I didn't know then that it would be another year before I moved out.

Running the management company meant that I had to host the A.G.M. in my flat. Miss Lee had made an appearance last year, so her excuses came as a mild relief.

*First Floor Flat,  
Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June 87*

*Dear Mr. Goodrick,*

*Thank you for your letter regarding meeting 7.30 pm but I'm afraid I'm not coming. I have rheumatism and I do find the back rooms in this house definitely damp, which is bad for that. In any case when I came to the last meeting, a thief got in and stole a black dress — I think I wrote and told you about this. I am so nervous now, that whenever I can I return from shopping in a taxi and stay out only a short time. Some person must have duplicate keys otherwise it would be impossible to get in. — I am sure you will understand, and let me know of any new decisions you agree to make.*

*With kind regards*

*From Miss Lee.*

There followed a brief lull in Miss Lee's diatribes, with just the odd letter about the builder finding its way under my door. Towards the end of the year I took my flat off the market with the intention of doing a little redecoration. Miss Lee found her stride once more.

---

D'you know, Miss Lee is beginning to pall, because nothing new happens; can we have a change of plot and pace? One is almost driven to check back and list every damn thing that went missing from her abode: presenting it to her might break through her mental log jam?

*Ken Lake, April 21, 1996*

November 3<sup>rd</sup> 87

Dear Mr. Goodrick

Yesterday when I returned from shopping a toothbrush also toothpaste which I had just purchased was not to be found anywhere. I am sure that I unpacked it. Also yesterday I was going to 'do' (clean) stairs, but my yellow plastic bottle of Jif was not to be found any where in my flat. So it does seem that some person can gain entry. I wish that this could be stopped — It is expensive to have to buy the same thing twice. & takes up time. The toothbrush was a glass colour transparent plastic & I believe that I took it from my trolley & put it on a box in hall. The bottle of Jif I certainly did not take out with me. We must be very careful this winter.

In Haste

From Yours sincerely

Miss Lee.

Quite often it isn't what Miss Lee loses, more where she has it when she loses it - rubber gloves from the bedroom, fish knives and forks from a hatbox and ....

17<sup>th</sup> November '87

Dear Mr Goodrick

A few days ago my small potato knife was taken from my hand bag. I have been very distressed about this. I did not mention this when talking on the telephone as I often turn out the contents of handbag & thought perhaps it might have fallen to the ground, and behind box. This potato knife has a smooth brown handle & was wrapped in a plastic Boots bag, but the Boots bag in which it was wrapped was left behind empty. It seems to have got taken out of my handbag when I was watching T.V. I noticed my bag had been opened. This knife could be dangerous. So I am worried  
Miss Lee

7<sup>th</sup> December '87

Dear Mr. Goodrick

Bad news — A heavy woolen vest which is very marked with my name in red cotton thread sewn in — has been taken from the white cupboard in lounge (backroom). I have been for long periods of time in very hot climates & so notice the cold in this country. So I would appreciate to have this returned to me. If you know who has taken it could you please very kindly be a sport and influence them to return it — I am out quite a lot & the person who took it could come in the same way again. You have a lot of people coming and going and when you are out I often hear movements in your flat — A couple of days ago I heard hammering above my ceiling ie your floor, obviously you were in then. I've had my T.V. moved but let me know if you still hear it. Please do the right thing & put a stop to this kind of thing if you know who has done it. With kind regards

---

It's interesting that there's controversy over Miss Lee and her letters. Yes, they are hilarious, and sad, and boring, and cruel - I can never bring myself to read a whole instalment, but I think I'd feel disappointed if it disappeared. It's a kind of lopsided tribute to the infinite inventiveness of the human imagination. {Cont. overleaf....}

*from Miss Lee*

The 'hammering from above' was one of my fruitless efforts to make the flat a little more saleable. My bathroom floor had a linoleum covering that was curling up at the edges and I was trying to do a botched job with panel pins to keep it in place. A few months later friends, somewhat wiser than I, advised me to redecorate properly. The result of that is detailed further on.

Miss Lee's T.V. being on at full volume late at night had, I can only assume, temporarily removed my last few flickers of sanity because I had ended up speaking to her about it - speaking to her face-to-face. Having experienced her long, meandering harangues in the past (trapped on the stairs by her) seeking her out voluntarily did seem like madness. Her solution of moving the T.V. had no effect whatsoever, as will become apparent in a few letters time.

Written on ----- > Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb '88

*Dear Mr Goodrick*

*I left an old pair of scissors out on the bed where I was working & did not take the scissors out with me this afternoon but when I returned the scissors had been taken. I use these continually as I cut up all letters also advertisements etc \_\_ The jug turned up so perhaps you could influence the person if you know who it is to return them please. Please try \_\_ Also my transparent plastic ruler (which had my name scratched on it (& address) seems to have been taken from my table in the hall. This was taken about 3 months ago. And believe this \_\_ I find it very difficult to keep a piece of soap \_\_ It always gets taken at some stage and I find this most annoying I think these kind of pranks are stupid and childish \_\_ If some person was making life difficult for you in this way and I knew who it was I would advise stopping it*

*With kind regards*

*From yours sincerely*

*Miss Lee*

Miss Lee had a shopping trolley (a sort of tartan holdall on wheels) which, judging by the weight of it (I hauled it upstairs for her once or twice), was used to carry most of her possessions whenever she went out. Why she forgot to pack her scissors on this occasion, and leave such tempting bait for the Clifton Criminal Community, one may never know. I'm not sure what the jug was that she referred to, I may just be misreading her writing. I'm also surprised that she didn't mention the closing bracket which seems to have been stolen from the above letter.

---

...What amazes me more than anything is the fact that Tim G managed to keep them all, filed, in order. That he's now prepared to transcribe them all in full, and comment on each one, must surely be an act of vengeance of the most deliberate (and therapeutic) kind.

*Colin Greenland*

*First Floor Flat  
March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1988.*

*Dear Mr Goodrick*

*I went out after lunch nearly 4.30 p.m. and was very surprised to see the light on in hall \_\_ (the one which is on my meter) \_\_ Could you please very kindly remind your guests to turn off switch in hall downstairs before they leave \_\_? Of course it might not have been one of your guests \_\_ but it seems the hall flat people are away as their kitchen window is completely closed. I do hate to have to remind you of this but my electric bills are simply terrific and quite double to what they were at the same time some years ago. In terrific haste.*

*With kind regards*

*From*

*Miss Lee*

As I've mentioned previously, Miss Lee herself was the culprit here. And I suppose that a low wattage light bulb is much more likely to double your electricity bill than seven years of inflation. This letter is mainly included as being the last reference she made to the light, a constant theme over the years I spent in the flat.

As I said above, my friends persuaded me to do some redecoration. It is amazing what you can achieve with one hundred pounds, a gang of helpful friends, stacking all your accumulated junk in one room and a few borrowed plants and pictures. The flat was transformed. I put it on the market for £10,000 more than previously and received four offers at the asking price within a week. Unfortunately, the one I accepted dragged on until Easter and then fell through on Good Friday, the day I was going on holiday for a week in the Yorkshire Dales. I don't suppose it really compares to crucifixion, but it felt like it at the time. Still, there was always Miss Lee's T.V. to look forward to.

*Top Flat,  
Monday May 2<sup>nd</sup> '88*

*Dear Mr Goodrick*

*My T.V. does seem to annoy you, but I'm wondering if your carpet is perhaps thin, as I do not seem to have my T.V. on very loud, although I am a little deaf in one ear. Regarding the thieving I forgot to mention it to you, but some few weeks-ago a person got in & took way an arm chair which had one arm broken. The seat was well padded in scarlet vinyl & it was a most comfortable chair. It is most obvious that some person finds it very easy to get into my flat & I find it very distressing. It is probably some person out of work & has nothing better to do & taking away house cloths \_\_ wire from windows, when curtains are being washed would amuse the person \_\_ I (not recently) noticed that the white nob from my kitchen cupboard had been taken \_\_ and long ago \_\_ a handle from bathroom cupboard was taken leaving only one. also a plastic towel rail. This is what you call petty stealing and it is very annoying to the victim. I wish it could stop as it is not doing the guilty person*

---

The Miss Lee letters are whimsical ephemera, strange.  
*The Lost Janet Stevenson letter, 21st November 1995*

*any good whatsoever.*

*I hope you will be happy in your new house & will not be bothered with the worries that you have had here. In great haste*

*From. Miss Lee*

*P.S.*

*A few days ago the people in the hall flat left their door open \_\_\_ which I thought was most unwise.*

By the time I received the above note I'd found another buyer for the flat - four students who seemed like they needed a good dose of Miss Lee. Not that I'm at all hostile towards students, of course. We've even let one into the Bristol SF group and he's OK. Well, normal then. Or perhaps weird would be a better description. I'll refrain from identifying him but his first name rhymes with 'heave' and his surname rhymes with 'used ta'.

(undated - sometime between 2<sup>nd</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> May '88)

*Dear Mr Goodrick*

*It seems the thief is still getting into my flat & just recently 2 small pairs of scissors have been taken also 2 pairs of gloves 1, grey wool and the other beige from cupboard in lounge. I am wondering if the man living with you heard anything suspicious \_\_\_ as he is in so much \_\_\_ This petty theiving is usually done by young boys of 15 or 16. Do your best please I do need the items I buy. With kind regards*

*From*

*Miss Lee*

Hmmmm. I'm not sure whether Miss Lee saw me as some sort of Fagin figure, with my mysterious lodger as Bill Sykes and a pack of young boys ever ready to do my bidding. "Pair of yeller rubber gloves mister Goodrick? I'll acquire some for you forthwith, mister Goodrick, yer can trust the Dodger. Piece of soap as well? Might be tricky, but leave it to me. Ruined one of your slippers in an accident with a potato knife? No problem."

*First Floor Flat*

*26/6/88*

*Dear Mr Goodrick*

*Yesterday a person entered my flat (it seems) & took one winter slipper. I had cleaned it & put it up against box to dry. This seems like a stupid boyish trick\_\_\_ My green house cloth, which I had hemmed around to make easy to put (flick) under wardrobe \_\_\_which I left in bathroom (on floor) has not turned up. Some person must be getting in but lets hope the situation will change for the better\_\_\_ With kind regards*

*From Yours Sincerely Miss Lee.*

*Written in great haste.*

---

I do not believe that Tim's saga of Miss Lee has a significant basis in fact. To use a phrase my mother used with me, "it's neither clever nor funny". I find it longwinded and tedious, and the only part of the fanzine that I omitted. I agree with Jackie Duckhawk's comments. {Cont. overleaf....}

I suppose the 'in great haste' might excuse the fact that the letter reads like it was written by someone who has partially undergone the treatment meted out to some of the characters in Ian Watson's 'The Embedding'. I don't suppose that leaving the slipper to dry was a boyish trick or that she left her 'warderobe' in the bathroom.

June 27<sup>th</sup> '88

Dear Mr Goodrick

*Regarding my slipper that was taken on Sunday from my hall. I did hear some person moving about in your flat \_\_ but I believe on Sunday you were not here. You are over 21 years old. Could you not influence the person that is doing stupid things\_\_ Can't you inform him of what is right & what is wrong. I am sorry for the men (boys) etc who cannot get work \_\_ but they are not willing to begin in small jobs \_\_ For instance Lord Nuffield began as a newspaper boy\_\_ Lord Denning Master of the Rolls is son of a draper\_\_ These people had good characters & so got on. See that my slipper is returned & be an influence for good.*

*In haste Miss Lee*

That was an election broadcast on behalf of the Conservative party. In the next letter Miss Lee seems to fancy herself as Miss Marple.

5<sup>th</sup> July

Dear Mr Goodrick

*Thank you for bringing up my groceries but I would like to have my small scissors returned. Yesterday before going out, I put the scissors in a pocket of my old green woolen jacket \_\_ I wished to find out if some person (swooper) gets in. The scissors were taken. Please exert your influence & see what you can do. Also the slipper that was taken has not been returned yet. \_\_ All he has to do is drop them (the 2 items) on any part of floor \_\_ It seems this person finds it very easy to drop in.*

*With kind regards*

*Miss Lee*

I'm not sure if this was yet another pair of scissors or what. By now, things had reached critical on my house move. I'd put an offer on the house I was buying way back in February. The owner had already moved to Liverpool with his job and had been quite patient but was now threatening to put the house back on the market. I could hardly blame him as prices were rising extremely quickly because the rules on mortgages were about to change. This was how I'd managed to up the price of my flat by ten grand. My solicitor was confident that the sale of the flat would complete later in the month so I took the risk of getting a bridging loan. The next few weeks left my nerves a bit fraught with the worry that my sale might fall through leaving me looking at some staggering debts.

---

....My grandmother did not become senile, but a friend's did and a great-aunt did. Don't make fun. There but for the grace of God go I....? On the other hand, Jane Carnell likes it; it is impossible to please all of the people all of the time. (Though Tesco possibly succeeds in displeasing all of its purchasers of leaky 6-pint milk cartons all of the time, so you did a lot better.)

Janet Stevenson, 1st June 1996

The next letter arrived on my birthday, but it was Miss Lee who wanted many happy returns.

July 8<sup>th</sup> '88

Dear Mr Goodrick

*I would be most grateful to have my small scissors and one slipper returned to me, so if you or the man you share your flat with can help I would be pleased. I am sure that a real thief would not want one of my slippers or take away an old pair of scissors. So it must be a person with a spiteful nature and nothing else to do (no interests) & out of work. It is a kind of stupid boyish (not mature) thing to do. A few days ago a pink plastic bottle containing soap (liquid) was taken from my kitchen so some person is getting into my flat. You mentioned leaving about Eastertime so are you here now or there!? Perhaps you have not sold your flat yet?*

With kind regards

From

Miss Lee.

*P.S. A new pair of winter slippers are expensive, so lets hope the thief will relent.*

The next letter continues a conversation (can it be a conversation if only one person speaks?) that Miss Lee had with me on the stairs. She was complaining about a copy of the Radio Times, from about a year ago, having vanished.

July 16<sup>th</sup> '88

Dear Mr Goodrick,

*As I was saying I keep all the old numbers of Radio Times, because the musical programs (concerts and Proms) are so good. This gives me an idea of which pieces to buy, when I get a new record player. I had a record player which was stolen from an open case in my bedroom. I was making list the other day of concerts and players and got up to Radio Times 6<sup>th</sup> June to 12<sup>th</sup> June 1987. Then I put the Radio Times in front room, and it was taken \_\_ There was a picture of Mrs Thatcher our Prime Minister being interviewed by Sir Robin Day \_\_ so it was election time. I had not finished with this\_\_ reading through \_\_ and it is my Radio Times & paid for by me so I would appreciate to have it returned. I am sure you will agree I should be able to keep my magazines\_ No ordinary thief would do this. You are very considerate I consider. So if you know who has taken this please persuade whoever it is to put it back in the place where it was taken from. ie amongst newspaper on top of cupboard in front room. I put it there because that is as far as I got\_\_ With good wishes*

From

Miss Lee

*Excuse scrawl\_\_ Written in great haste.*

---

I disliked "The Miss Lee Letters." I never found these articles particularly funny, and after six instalments the joke is surely worn out anyway.

Chris Murphy, 8th May 1996

Despite the bridging loan looking massively frightening (in the end I only had it for just over two weeks), the relief I felt in actually packing up and moving out of the flat was immense. I didn't leave Miss Lee my new address and I even went ex-directory with my new phone. Paranoid? Perhaps, but what price a little paranoia when it brought such peace of mind?

I'll let Miss Lee have the final word.

28/7/88

Dear Mr Goodrick

Would you like me to buy you a piece of soap every now & again. You work so hard and cannot find time for everything.

Kind regards

From

Miss Lee.

Tim Goodrick



First Floor Flat

Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup> 1996

Dear Mr. & Mrs. (?) Binfield,

I was recently holidaying in the Radisson Edwardian hotel in Heathrow, where I happened to find some papers — there were titled 'Balloons Over Bristol 70'. You will probably be able to imagine the shock and surprise I felt when I saw some of my personal correspondence with Mr. Goodrick printed inside. You will understand why I am upset — I am a woman living alone and am often burgled. It is spiteful of Mr. Goodrick — or his lodger if he took my letters — to print them, and I would like them returned.

I have always tried to live a good life, and hope that you will do the same. These things Mr. Goodrick is doing are such a nuisance, I find.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Lee



## The Letters Columns

### Fans

“All fans love lists” writes Christina (of Pognophobia) in the rather wonderfully titled “Macramé Theory of Fanzines”. Listomania has certainly broken out in Acnestis, of books, of authors, poems and now of favourite words (terpsichore, coterminous, aubade..) but I’m not sure I share the passion. Oh dear - revealed again as a not-quite-fan. (*Ed. Join the club Steve*).

“Weird comment revealed to me by Vikki from Eastercon: “Steve won’t get anywhere for fanart, because he locs.” Huh?)

*Steve Jeffery, 21st April 1996*

### Universal Praise For Postcards from Burnham

I loved the “Postcards from Burnham” reportage of a convention ‘as it happens’ (guys and gals). How do you get this much on a postcard? Your writing must be smaller than mine (one reason I never send handwritten locs, at least not to faneds who don’t have a handy electron microscope). I can’t write them this interesting either - usually I just wibble a bit about the weather, or whatever the British traditionally do with postcards (“Our apartment is shown on the picture on the other side. I have marked it with an X”) I suspect you of cheating outrageously. But entertainingly and enjoyably. So I’ll forgive you. If you send me postcards.

*Steve Jeffery, 21st April 1996*

I enjoyed the “Postcards from Burnham”. Christina’s writing will be missed when she’s gone, I hope she sends back postcards from all over the world! (*Ed: Your wish is our command, see Christina’s articles at the front of the fanzine*).

*Bridget Hardcastle, May 1st (3 days to go till Luke Thkywalker Day!) 1996*

“Postcards from Burnham” represents a refreshing attempt to do something original with a conrep.

*Chris Murphy, 8th May 1996*

I enjoyed “Postcards from Burnham”. It is entertaining without getting too bogged down in details about people unknown to me. Unfortunately that is all I can think of to say about it.

*Janet Stevenson, 1st June 1996*

### Dr Who

'Is the Doctor Homosexual?' is an entertaining piece of nonsense, apparently calculated to delight slash fandom and annoy Whovians (on second thoughts, the *Who* crowd might enjoy it. I have the impression that they are more broad-minded and less possessive about their favourite programme than, say, the *Prisoner* appreciators or Gerry Anderson fans.) The enigmatic Doctor Skagra clearly has detailed knowledge of the series, so is either a Whovian him/herself or someone connected with it professionally. Hmm, could this be a certain novelist published by Virgin? (*Ed: I'm afraid that revelation will have to wait until a later issue. Ohhh, the suspense!*).  
*Chris Murphy, 8th May 1996*

Is the Doctor Homosexual? Do we care, really? No. Sorry. I thought Romana was cute, but others insisted she had a nose like a squished tomato, and I sort of lost interest after that - although I did once have tea with Debbie Watling (gosh, fame).  
*Steve Jeffery, 21st April 1996*

Dr Homowho seemed just silly - surely one could make a better case for his being something quite ordinary like a unitesticular necrophiliac rat fucker? Though I confess the image of Peri leaning over the console was felicitous.  
*Ken Lake, April 21 1996*

I neither know nor care whether Dr Who is heterosexual. The idea of Bonnie Langford as an undeserved punishment appealed but otherwise I found the article unamusing (boring rather than immoral).  
*Janet Stevenson, 1st June 1996*

Dr Who? How true...  
*Bridget Hardcastle, May 1st 1996*

### Fanzines / Size/ American

Having already reached the perfect size for a fanzine (22 pages, or thereabouts) we fall promptly into the lettercolumn for the last third of the zine. I'm prepared to stretch a point with lettercolumns, especially ones like this.

As to the size and publication frequency of American fanzines, apart from twiltone, megalomania, lettercols that won't end (and slow the schedules, allowing more time for more letters to come in, slowing the schedules...) and, of course, as an homage to Ellison's Last Dangerous Visions, could it be that America is, you know, a little bit bigger than the UK, so more fans, more contributors and more locs. Just an observation; I offer this as my small Big Theory of American Fanzines.

But I don't think I've received an American fanzine, outside of the relentless schedule of *Apparatchik* (distributed in the UK) and *Wild Heirs*, in yonks. Were they all shamed

into inactivity by the energetic flurry of UK fanac at the Worldcon, or is the US suffering from an outbreak of duplicator rot and twiltone blight? Maybe they just can't afford to post the monsters anymore (though they could caulk them, fit sails, and float them across. In which case a fanac American armada could be sighted off the shores any day now. Is that Drake's Drum I hear beating?).

*Attitude* is big (60 pages for Att 6) and yes it is 'contrived' in that it has an aim, a manifesto even, and a convention goal it is working towards. You might equally call convention Progress Reports and Program Books 'contrived' in that they are part of something larger than the immediate publication. But I don't think it matters; *Attitude* does pretty much what it sets out to, acting as a focal point (to borrow Andy Hooper's phrase) fanzine for fandom and SF (and *that* is refreshing to us still skiffyphiles), and it does it very well.

*Steve Jeffery, 21st April 1996*

The real problem with US fanzines is not their size (which is admittedly gross) but that they're all about people I've never met, doing things I don't care about, expressed in terminology I find impermeable (*Ed: Sounds horribly familiar*). Now if only these fecund characters were a part of Britfandom, we might see some real oomph injected into the Home Front. Still, they've nothing to match Dwest, which is somehow reassuring until you meet him.

But they come from a different literary tradition, having never experienced our WWII paper shortage, which reduced our newspapers to 6pp and taught us all (Dave Langford most of all - imagine ANSIBLE in the hands of the FOSFAX gang) the skill of précis. Hence the proliferation there of "a kind of a" and such like pleonastic prolixities.

*Ken Lake, April 21 1996*

What did I do with the fanzines I got at Novacon? Um, they're still in a big pile. Twenty fanzines is a daunting stack. Where do you start? I've read (and enjoyed) bits of them but not done anything constructive yet, and I won't either, till I've finished with the fanzines I got at Evolution (a far more manageable eleven). After all, it's never too late to loc!

I enjoyed Christina's fanzine reviews (does this mean I don't have to read them?). They give a different slant on most of the fanzines from my reading of them, it's interesting to see someone else's insights. I think I'll give them embarrassingly high praise.

*Bridget Hardcastle, May 1st 1996*

Thanks for the copy of *Balloons Over Bristol 10*. The covers are good and I liked the contents, with two major exceptions. One was Christina's unfair review of *Eyeballs in the Sky*. She thinks the editor is 'on the edge of fandom.' It must have been a different Tony Berry who helped run those conventions and stood for TAFF, then.

*Chris Murphy, 8th May 1996*

Not much interested in reading *about* fanzines, though - reviews, possibly, but theory and philosophy, no.

*Colin Greenland, 5 Jun 96.*

Thanks for BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL 8. I am one of the "etc." in the "Americans, Australians etc" you mention in your editorial. Can it be that I have received a fanzine not already read and loxed by Harry Warner Jr., or even my prolific countryman locer, Lloyd Penney?

Why Canada is underpopulated in fanzine fans, I don't know. Off the top of my head, east coast to west coast, I think of Rodney Leighton in Nova Scotia; Benoit Girard in Quebec; Mike McKenny, Lloyd Penney, Mike Glicksohn, Taral Wayne, Catherine Crockett, Colin Hinz, Hope Leibowitz, Boyd Raeburn, Jim Caughran, myself in Ontario; Chester Cuthbert in Manitoba; Dale Speirs, Robert Runte in Alberta; Graeme Cameron, Scott Patri, Garth Spencer, Andrew Murdoch in British Columbia.

I have to wonder, if you find the thickness of certain US fanzines daunting, even such a sterling example of zineness as BLAT!, do you also avoid reading thick novels?

You are right about BLAT! being several fanzines in one package. The Dan Steffan and Ted White sections each would stand alone as fine personalzines, plus the contributed material and the letters of comment (*Ed. AT LAST, we have the meaning of loc! Although, I'm not too sure about being 'loxed' or being a 'locer'*).

Too many locs in giant genzines? Possible, but I have yet to read a lettercol I didn't enjoy. I have set for myself the task of responding to every fanzine which I receive. In practice, I do very well, if slowly. Fanzines are participatory, a party on paper. Letters are thank yous from the guests. An unloxed fanzine will wither and die.

And, yes, a fanzine can be too successful. Each of the four issues of the revived HABBAKUK was thicker than the preceding issue. Great fun for the recipients, but overwhelming, in the end - I am guessing - for Bill Donaho. Publishing HAB, too, must have been a financial drain, as well as time-consuming. But all those letters... 'They like me, they really like me,' the editor has to think in response.

My voting in the 1995 FAAN Awards would have been quite different if I had not read BLAT! 4. I gave BLAT! my first place vote, and Rob Hansen and Andy Hooper my first and second place fanwriting votes, for "The Reaffirmation" and "Don't Start Me Talking", respectively.

"Reaffirmation" inspired me to end my locs with the salutation, Keep Your Shield of Umor Bright, until I switched to an ending of my own devising.

*Murray Moore 1st April 1996*

Of all the fanzines reviewed, the only one I have ever come across is Habbakuk. I received that only once or twice (alas!) and really enjoyed it. There was another trans-Atlantic "door-stop" fanzine that I used to receive from Leah and enjoyed, too. Clearly we have different tastes.

*The Lost Janet Stevenson letter, 21st November 1995*

### Miscellany.

“Retune my radio”? This risks life and limb. Besides I can’t, Vikki seems to have superglued the dial to Radio 5 for permanent football commentary up in the study. It’s on but I have learned not to listen. Ambient footie?

I am suddenly struck by the appositeness of the Bristol, VA map I sent you - with the “Lee Highway” running right through it. Paperville; I wonder what they do there?  
*Steve Jeffery, 21st April 1996*

I see US Bristols (not bacover but unnumbered page 34) overflow into two States, doubtless with a ‘Spung!’ between them, but I’m glad to see your (and my former) stomping ground has resorted to being Henry II’s City and County of. (Oh, you explain it to your trasPond readers: a bit of culture never hurt them) (*Ed: Answers on a postcard, prize to be awarded*).

William Bains is dead right about Russian p/reprints: O for the days of the Akademiya Nauk SSSR, though even then Referativnyi Zhurnal was a bit, er, ersatz paperwise. Now, of course, it’s all on The Net and hence outwith my reach, which is just as well as with advancing age I find days have no more than five subjective hours in them. Thankš for filling several of them!

*Ken Lake, April 21 1996*

### Fannish Miscellany

What’s with the change of editorial address? Could it be, is it possible, have Pete and Sue become TRUFANS? Inconceivable! Whatever next? That BNF Steve Mowbray didn’t complete our training properly. Back at Manchester we were under his thrall, he would guide us through the paths of fandom so subtly that we never knew we were being led; we were initiated into the True Way of congoing, and spent hours at cons practising sitting in the bar and not going to programme items. We marvelled at the nonchalant grace with which he accepted fanzines from passing bearded neophytes. We steered well clear of ‘that Steve Glover - he’ll have you running conventions if you’re not careful’, as Steve used to warn us. And the beer! Pints of it we would have drunk, if only we’d not been cider drinkers.

Then he leaves for Edinburgh and, finding ourselves outside his benign influence we end up doing all sorts of nefarious activities; I’ve run an Eastercon (past tense! It’s over! Ha ha ha!), Tony’s gophered at a con (‘Waste of drinking time’), and you two are editing a fanzine. I wonder what will happen next - a Perdle story winning a Hugo? Mark and Elaine founding the UK’s first space colony to house their gerbils? Mancunian filk circles (aliens landing in Manchester’s corn fields and flattening the crops with their singing)? Neal Tringham as Fan Guest of Honour at the next British Worldcon?

(FX: Remembers Steve is Sue’s brother. Imagines Sue making spluttering noises while reading the above paragraph). Better get on with the fanzine...

*Bridget Hardcastle, May 1st 1996*

Thanks to you and your collective for "Balloons Over Bristol" 8 and 9, which the postman handed to me this morning.

(We do not have a letter-box. The neighbours have one outside their gate but then they have one very big [actually very soft] dog - an Italian mastiff - and one fairly big [and very loud, and rather aggressive] dog and one medium-sized bitch. Gordon shouts at Jake, the middle one, every time Jake barks when Gordon drives past, and Jake slinks away with his tail between his legs. Now Jake tends to slink away as soon as he sees the Land Rover coming.)

Congratulations on winning the NOVA. I certainly think that BOB is far more interesting than that boring old Ansible, that, inexplicably, won some award or other at Conspiracy. It should have been TNH. TNH was fun and had some point to it. I must admit that I preferred TNH to BOB, but I think that this is related to my interests. TNH had more personal items in, which I prefer. Also i) I am not really into specifically fannish things these days since a) I do other things with my time (genealogy, Dreadful Dyslexia courses etc.) and b) I've somewhat lost interest, opportunity and mobility, and ii) I'm not really into the music scene. Those are my preferences, not criticisms of the quality of writing and effort. BOB certainly does have a point to it.

Anyway, to continue. I like the front cover of issue 8 and thought it was a good idea to have a hard cover to an issue that you were distributing at Worldcon.

*The Lost Janet Stevenson letter, 21st November 1995*

The letters section is excellent, full of debate and random snippets of information. I agree with William Bains that the 'no-frontiers convention' is a myth, fandom is naturally divided by interests, personalities and geography. However, he seems to expect too much from the people he talks with at cons. Booze, late nights and relaxation are not likely to produce the conversational equivalent of Radio 4. The chats I remember best from conventions and parties are the silly ones, like an attempt to recall *all* the lyrics of the theme song from some old TV show, or an absurd but perfectly serious argument about whether the affluence of incohol was causing the room to rotate towards the left or right. They were fun, and isn't that what cons are supposed to be about?

*Chris Murphy, 8th May 1996*

BoverB-10 arrives - sod going out for The Times, settled down with a bottle of Medd Cyrbns Cach - Welsh redcurrant mead, disappointing even when mixed with whatever else comes to hand, in this case Old Jamaican Ginger Beer, now there's a really refreshing drink. Ty Brethyn Vineyard Ltd., Lllangollen, do eight or nine varieties, I ordered six different; should have skipped this one. 10.5% ABV, and with carriage it averages out at £7.32 a bottle; not worth it, but how d'you know till you've tried? And the Hippocras is good.

Turn to Balloon Post first (doesn't everyone, to see if they've been wahfed (*Ed:?*) or honoured; please tell Andy I can too spell Hooper, even if he doesn't have a sensayuma), to be amazed by your 150 circulation. I can't afford to pub my ish, but get quite excited by my 10pp-a-month contribs to two apas (PoE and The Org, both highly recommended) which gerra lorra feedback from just 15 to 25 members. John

Ollis says he was dissuaded from a second fanzine after his first pulled so little response (apart from of course Ken Lake).

Perplexed by Zorn and EITS crits - 'Why haven't I had these yet?' - till I realised these were issues I locced, oh, months ago.

*Ken Lake, April 21 1996*

Thanks for "Balloons over Bristol 10". The excuse for not including my loc to the previous edition was novel (*Ed: Christina lost it!*). This is my second loc of the day, which is also novel. Well, in truth I was intending to loc it tomorrow but the weather and my asthma are incompatible so I can't go out for an evening stroll. What should I do to guarantee that you don't lose this loc? Send multiple copies? Use fluorescent paper (the printer won't take it.) Use other bright paper? Stick ladybird stickers on - but on what, the paper or the envelop? (*Ed: Janet opted for bright yellow paper with 2 stickers - it worked*).

The computer just swallowed my first attempt at a loc. It keeps on doing that recently.

So. Mike and Alison Scott have split up and Peter-Fred has broken off with Christina. Does anyone at all have a stable relationship these days? Nobody except Christina ever sends me fanzines these days. Mainly because I move around in alternate fandoms - like the Cumbria Family History Society and the North Cumbria Dyslexia Association (*Ed: Sounds like a dangerous combination to me*). I plan to write an article on my elusive great great grandmother entitled "Desperately Seeking Susan (Moffat)". I keep on writing book reviews that the NCDA fails to publish - but I owe them something for a subsidy last year. I have written something for a re-enactment society newsletter but it has not appeared yet - the newsletter, I mean, never mind the article.

The last time I wrote and requested a fanzine from someone, having read a review, he ignored my request. I hope that this does not happen this time.

Twelve years ago, when I paid rates, there was no fanac in Croydon. Twelve years ago there was a joke about Papa members being male virgins with word-processors. Apparently you had to meet both criteria to be a member. Do you have to have an e-mail address now? Though at least Christina refers to it as "the dread Internet".

I share Steve Stile's dislike of hypocrisy in neighbours. Hypocrisy, tact, it's all lies. I hate it. I agree with him that his neighbour got what he deserved. All those people! (*Ed: Steve moved a family of approximately 13 into the flat which his neighbour had just forced him out of*).

*Janet Stevenson, 1st June 1996*

### Eastercon

Thanks for Balloons over Bristol. I seemed to be rushing from place to place all over Eastercon, trying to fit everything in at once, so I didn't get to sit and talk with as many people as I would have liked - in the bar, lounge or Jacuzzi. It was like being a neo all over again (not a bad thing; you do get jaded after a while, and a good skiffy recharge once in a while is as refreshing as a period of gafi).

For all that, it was one of the best Eastercons I can remember. Granted, the Radisson had its, err, 'character', both in the labyrinthine maze of twisty corridors (at the end of which little delights, like the showing of the Thaumaturgist's Dictionary could be

found) and in the restaurant waiter who had to keep running back to the kitchen to explain the items on the menu; "it is, ah, vegetables..I go check."

Occasionally I would collapse with a coffee - which seemed to come in at anywhere between 50p and £2.50 depending which part of the hotel I fell over in - and look around, wondering which other timezone or postcode area Vikki or the others might have parked themselves in. Or I would charge off to an interesting looking programme item, to pass Paul or Maureen on the stairs, looking more and more frazzled and rushing somewhere in the opposite direction.

I'm looking forward to Novacon, where I can just slump and collect fanzines. Of course, I always say that.....

*Steve Jeffery, 21st April 1996*

What complaining about Eastercon bar prices? I heard no complaining about Eastercon bar prices (except on the Thursday night when they were outrageously high, i.e. normal hotel prices. This is why we negotiate convention bar rates, yes? It felt odd, going to a scientific conference last week (Institute of Physics Annual Congress - Pete's turn to splutter) where they didn't seem to have thought about drink prices, or getting vegetarian food (cheese or egg sandwiches are all very well, but after five meals worth they started to pall)).

*Bridget Hardcastle, May 1st 1996*

### Music

Music - how the other half lives!

*Bridget Hardcastle, May 1st 1996*

Having little interest in modern pop, I followed the advice in the editorial and skipped the articles on music. This isn't intended as a criticism, just an admission that I stopped listening a long time ago.

*Chris Murphy, 8th May 1996*

Thanks for and good luck with BoverB (which for some reason I always think must stand for *Bover Boots*). Hope Christina's departure doesn't mean an end to the music coverage, which tho it tends to float a bit, balloonishly, is very much what I need.

*Colin Greenland, 5 Jun 96.*

### Addresses

Steve Jeffery, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon, OX5 2XA,

Ken Lake, 1A Stephen Court, Ecclesbourne Road, Thornton Heath, CR7 7BP

Bridget Hardcastle, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX,

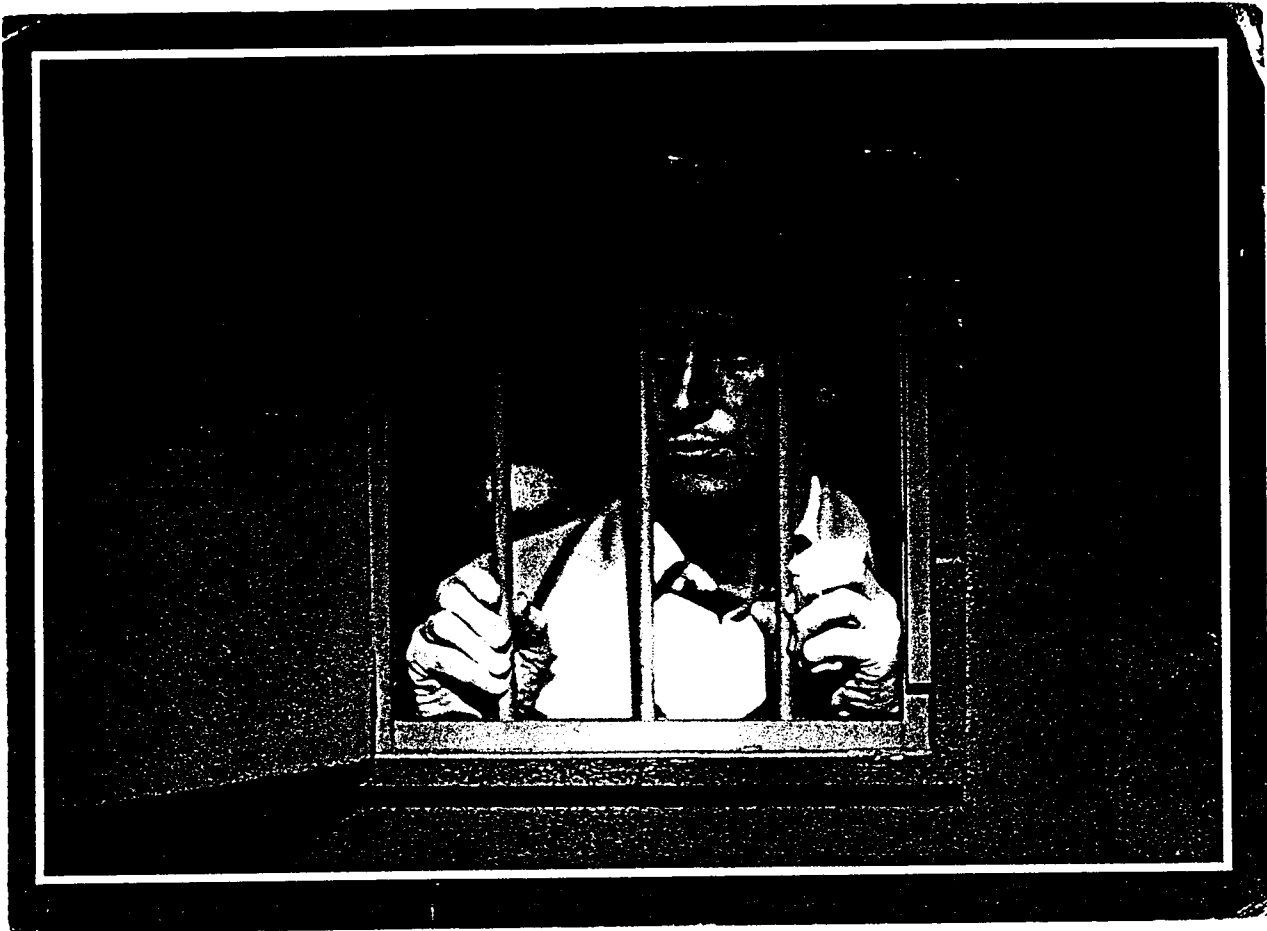
Chris Murphy, 7 Mullion Drive, Timperley, Cheshire, WA15 6SL

Colin Greenland, 98 Sturton Street, Cambridge, CB1 2QA

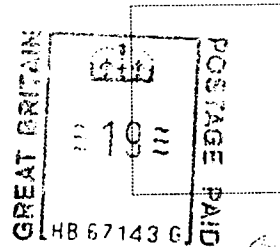
Murray Moore - murray.moore@encode.com

Janet Stevenson, Roan, Roweltown, Carlisle, CA6 6LX





Doctor Who - The Caves of Androzani  
 Peter Davison as The Doctor.  
 Originally broadcast March 8th - 16th 1984.



CHRISTINA:-

MANY THANKS FOR BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL  
 #10 - AND NO PRIZES FOR GUESSING  
 THAT MY FAVOURITE PIECE WAS "POSTCARDS  
 FROM BURNHAM", A BRILLIANT FORMAT FOR  
 CAPTURING THE INTIMACY AND IMMEDIACY OF  
 A CONVENTION WITHOUT THE CLUTTER OF  
 FORESIGHT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S MORE  
 WORRYING, THOUGH: MY HABIT OF SENDING  
 MILDLY RISQUE POSTCARDS, OR THAT PHIL  
 GREENAWAY KEEPS HIS IN HIS TROUSER  
 POCKET. (I TRUST YOU WILL NOTE THE  
 LACK OF BATHING BEAUTY ON THE REVERSE  
 OF THIS LOC - RATHER, IN HONOUR OF DR  
 SKAGRA'S THESIS, A RARE PIC OF THE  
 FIFTH DOCTOR'S BRIEF IMPRISONMENT AFTER  
 UNWISELY DECIDING TO 'COME OUT' WHILST  
 HOLIDAYING ON THE ISLE OF MAN.)

ER, GEORGE M. COHAN WAS THE COMPOSER  
 OF SUCH STIRRING TUNES AS "OVER THERE",  
 "GRAND OLD FLAG" AND "YANKEE DOODLE  
 DANDY" (THE LAST SUPPLIED THE TITLE  
 OF THE 1942 BIOPIC STARRING JAMES  
 CAGNEY). GLAD TO BE OF SERVICE.

TO:-

CHRISTINA LAKE #  
 % TOP FLAT  
 160 WELLS ROAD  
 TOTTERDOWN  
 BRISTOL  
 BS4 2AG

FROM:-

STEVE GREEN  
 33 SCOTT ROAD  
 OLTON SOLIHULL  
 B92 7LP

(\* AND TO PETE & JUE, TO WHOM  
 I BID A WARM HOWDY" AND  
 APOLOGISE FOR NOT READING  
 THE CLOSING PARAGRAPH TILL  
 I'D ALREADY WRITTEN THIS...)

*Pest, Jan*  
 14.4.96



BOXTREE

The Back Page  
(Cross Reference: Toilet Humour)

This is something plucked off the Internet by a student whose first name rhymes with 'heave' and whose surname rhymes with 'used ta'. Oh, alright, it was Steve Brewster. I said: "Write me something for BoverB. Something like that Dr Who article you penned last time" (I'm afraid this was me getting confused as Steve denies all knowledge, carnal or otherwise, of any Dr Who article) and two weeks later this landed in my virtual in-tray. It wasn't for several months that it transpired that this had actually been Steve's contribution! It is printed here more as a punishment than anything.

Here are a few medical tips,

Laxatives are not like aspirins, they take time to work so don't:-

- 1) After one hour of taking the prescribed dose, think 'this is isn't doing much, I wonder if taking another 3 doses will speed things up'.
- 2) And then think "Mmmm this chocolate (laxative) is really tasty, it can't have anything nasty in it, but I better not have anymore than 4 chunks (4 doses)".
- 3) And then feel happy as you read that the ingredient is phenolphylane (sp) and then think "That seemed fairly innocuous stuff when I did my O-level chemistry".
- 4) After another 2 hours think "I'm going back to the chemist, these are useless but I better take another 4 doses just to make sure that they don't work".
- 5) Sit back and think macho thoughts like "I've now taken 8 times the prescribed dose and the sea is still calm this must be some kind of world record, I must really be some hard man, wait until the boys hear about this".

Because,

- 1) Three hours afterwards you will be in so much agony that things couldn't possibly be any worse.
- 2) You will completely poison yourself, and if you do manage to stay conscious you will wonder which end is going to give out first.
- 3) For the next 3 days you will experience the closest thing to dysentery without actually having it.
- 4) You will blow air, as you are in agony but are more empty that if you'd had colonic irrigation.

So be warned!

[Name deleted] (a stone lighter than he was).