

Peter-Fred: Hey, that doesn't look like Bristol down there!
Christina : And that music. Doesn't it sound familiar to you?
Richard : Actually no, I always put earplugs in when soap operas come on.

Peter-Fred: Wouldn't it be easier to turn off the telly?

Christina : Look, isn't that Geoff down there kissing Michelle?

Richard : Uhh? I thought Geoff was meant to be gay?

Christina : I don't think so. He's just asked Michelle to marry him.

Peter-Fred: Richard's talking about Geoff RYMAN, you dummy. After all, this is meant to be an SF fanzine.

Christina : Come off it, when did we last run anything on science fiction? Anyway, this is much more fun - just for the Dockland's Eastercon, let's do :

BALLOONS OVER EASTENDERS



BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL 6

CONTENTS

Everybody wants to win...	Christina Lake	2
Miss Lee letters Part 3	Tim Goodrick	5
From the Pop Group to Portishead	Simon Lake	10
Party City	Christina Lake	12
Balloon Post	Steve Brewster	13

Illustrations p. 9, 11, 13
p. 23

Tony Walsh
Steve Jeffery

BoverB (as Steve likes to call it) is available to anyone who wants it (until we run out of copies) from Christina Lake, 12 Hatherley Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8QA (email : clake@wsxwat1.demon.co.uk)

The Bristol SF group meets every Thursday from 8.30 onwards at The Brewery Tap, Colston Street

Everybody wants to win the lottery (and keep the proceeds)

- a confused confession of inadequacy by Christina Lake

This evening a tiny Iranian lady came round to my door and went through a dossier of the crimes of the Iranian government, insisting in her heavily accented English that I look at the pictures of torture victims, missing children, corrupt ministers, and for good measure, her own son whom she had been forced to leave behind in Iran. She then produced a list of names of eminent people who supported her cause, and waited anxiously for me to confirm that I recognised and respected them (which since they mostly seemed to be drawn from the minor aristocracy, I didn't). Next she made me read a highlighted statement about the awfulness of it all, and finally - the coup de grace - the last page where a handful of 'real' cheques were artistically arranged within a plastic folder. On the opposite page was a scale of charges with £40 underlined, presumably indicating the correct level of donation for someone living in my road. By this time I was feeling rather coerced. While not doubting her sincerity or the worthiness of her cause, I did not particularly like being lectured at on my doorstep or being expected to part with a large sum of money at a moment's notice. When I said I would find her a couple of pounds, she looked at me as if I were personally colluding in the atrocities and suggested that five pounds would pay for a child's inoculation (for one of the missing children? The presentation had been so sensationalist that I seemed to have missed out on the real point of it somewhere along the line.) I retreated into feeble excuses - I already give to charity, I said, I agree this is a terrible thing, but I can't help solve all the world's problems, I said, I just sponsored someone on a bike ride yesterday, I said. All rationalisations for not giving her more money, but I felt resentful of her standing on my doorstep talking about torture when I wanted to get on with making my tea and watching Superman. And guilty because I did not want to give her my money - at least not as much as she wanted - although I'd given away larger sums earlier in the day to buy clothes and records and concert tickets. I gave her the two pounds in a sort of haze of righteous indignation at being hassled for more money, came back inside and immediately felt bad about the whole episode. As usual, the amount I had given, with such bad grace, was so much smaller than what I happily spend on myself. All I could do was try and forget about it.

I'd volunteered to help with the WaterAid exhibition mainly because it would mean a couple of hours out of work and, I hoped, a pleasant change from the isolation of my current job. My shift was, in effect, the first one, as the morning had been spent setting up. Robert, the WaterAid rep, was just blue-tacking up the last of the posters when I arrived. The exhibition consisted mainly of a few boards explaining how the charity helped to provide water sources for third world countries, various pamphlets and some merchandising. Before we rolled back the partition to let in the public (who far from waiting eagerly outside were simply browsing the public library where we were based, unaware that anything was going on), Robert showed me the list of suggested donations for the various pens, mugs, badges etc. These were only suggestions as legally we had no licence to sell goods. The first visitors were a couple of middle-aged ladies who immediately made a great thing about how high their water bills were, and seemed to think that we should be paying them instead of being expected to donate to our cause. Robert explained that WaterAid was a Third World charity completely separate from their local bills. The fact that the boards (unfortunately) had the Wessex Water logo on them was irrelevant (not to mention that we both worked for Wessex Water (which, of course, we tried not to)). Rather sportingly, they put some money in the tin. They were the last to do so for some time. Robert left me to handle the small trickle of visitors, most of whom wandered round the farthest edge of the exhibition, carefully avoiding going anywhere near me or the WaterAid collection tin. One or two did talk to me - one took a whole pile of leaflets and said

that she had been involved in in some capacity with a WaterAid project in Zambia (so clearly couldn't be expected to give more.) Another explained that she gave money to Oxfam so didn't need to give to this. Another engaged me in a conversation on third world causes culminating in trying to sell me a place on a workshop for whole body healing. Someone took a pen and put in about ten pence for it (suggested donation 30-50p). I began to feel redundant and downhearted. Somehow I felt personally responsible for the lack of money going into the collection tin. Should I put some in myself so it would look like my shift had been successful? Should I rush forward and rattle it under the nose of those few souls who ventured in to browse the exhibition? Should I take it out into the library and beat up old ladies in the large print section? Almost anything would be less boring than waiting for the reading public to stick its hands in its pockets and come up with some money. Still, deciding that over-enthusiasm might blight my chances for future employment in the Bath Public Library system, I stuck to reading about water supply projects in Africa and smiling politely when anyone came into the exhibition area. At least it gave me some insight into what I must look like when I avoid a collection tin. When Robert finally returned to take over I confessed that people hadn't given much money during my stint, but he seemed phlegmatic about it, saying that it was raising awareness of the charity that counted. I liked this idea, but suspect it might not have impressed my Iranian visitor!

Last year, instead of giving up sweets for Lent, I decided that I would give what the nuns at school used to call Lenten Alms. When I walked round Bristol, instead of shrinking to the far side of the pavement from the man with the cap and the written notice proclaiming his hunger, and dodging the sellers of the Big Issue, I would do what most fans (judging by any discussion of the matter I've seen in fanzines) already do, and give them some money. The rules were simple, I had to give something to everyone I passed who was asking for money (though even this rule becomes more complex when you pass someone sitting on the pavement looking miserable, but who isn't actually asking for money. Will they be insulted if you give them money and they weren't actually begging?). For the month or so that Lent lasted I felt this marvellous sense of liberation and well-being. I always made sure to have loose change in my pocket, since I tend to feel vulnerable digging my purse out of my bag, and so I could walk through the underpasses feeling righteous as I gave my small change while others scurried past, eyes averted. Then Lent ended and I didn't go out of my way to give to the rather threatening men with dogs; I began to avoid the Big Issue sellers because I never seemed to find the time to read them and they just piled up in my kitchen making me feel guilty; then I found I never had change in my pocket so it seemed easier to hurry past than dig out my purse; finally my charitable givings seemed to be reduced to whoever was sitting outside Somerfields (my local supermarket). The last straw was the "Selfish Little Bitch" incident which I'm half convinced I've written up somewhere before, but can't for the life of me think where (so skip this paragraph if you've heard it before!). I was standing at the bus stop about nine in the evening after a long day in London, made longer by British Rail changing the rules on when you could use SuperSaver tickets out of Paddington. Some guy began chatting up the girl in front of me at the bus stop and asked her for some money. She gave it, and they went on chatting. As an afterthought he asked me for some money too. I wasn't that keen to give it - I didn't honestly see why he who looked well dressed and not at all indigent needed money from me, or by what right he was simply expecting it for the asking. Still, I was going to give him some for the sake of a quiet life, when the bus turned up. I went to get on instead. He said "You were about to give me some money." "I'm sorry," I murmured vaguely. "Go on," he said, "you've got your purse open, you might as well." As usual when I feel coerced, I start to get stubborn. "Why should I?" I said, putting my purse back in my bag and moving away down the bus. "You selfish little bitch," he shouted after me for all the other passengers

to hear. I slunk off to my seat and started to cry (another bad habit). No-one in the bus said anything. I felt terrible, as if they all agreed with him. After that, I rather went off alms giving. I was a selfish little bitch and that was that. There was no place in heaven for selfish little bitches, so what was the point in trying?

The Chairman of Wessex Water earns £160,000 a year which is nearly 10 times my annual salary. What can he possibly do with all that money? Well, I believe he has a rather nice house somewhere near Bristol. He has a new wife too, which must cost something. They were pictured together recently in Hello Magazine presiding over some charity swimming gala. All the same, does anyone really need that amount of money? It's hard to believe, till I think about how little I've saved since my salary went up by one third when I went full time, so I suppose, by the same token, Mr Hood has no difficulty living up to his outstanding means. Perhaps, too, charity is easy for him. He can give at a level that might actually make a difference. Or does he ever lie awake at night thinking what a small proportion of his income it actually is? Somehow I doubt it. Mr Hood is in the position where he can do more than give money. One year Chairman of Water Aid, this year Chairman of Bristol 2000, the project to rebuild Bristol's derelict docklands, he is influential enough to make a difference. Ironically he is so busy being influential on various committees that it is hard to see how he finds time to do anything at Wessex Water to justify the position (and salary) that made him influential in the first place.

But charity is big business these days. Take the lottery. It even has its own regulator, Oflot (which sounds more like some Eastern European airline), and of course its own TV show, not to mention its own profit-making operating company. Yet, apparently, people look on buying lottery tickets as a substitute for giving to charity. Who are we kidding? The only charity we're giving to there is ourselves, to foster our dreams of immense wealth. Then again, take Comic Relief, the other big media hyped charity. Unlike my Iranian visitor, Comic Relief choses its sponsors from popular culture (so no opening there for Mr Hood, thank you very much), and its methods from religious revivalist movements. Well, that's what it looked like as the BBC marathon attempted to whip viewers into a frenzy of multiple donations, flashing the credit card line number across the screen as often as possible while offering various humourous incitements to pledge your money. The mass hysteria theory behind the show was nowhere more evident than in the fact that never once while I was watching did they put up an address where you could SEND money. That wasn't what it was about; it was about giving NOW, about watching the total raised go up and up, about proving that we were all out there together pushing for the same thing, giving the illusion of empowerment. (And it was about getting their bloody record to the top of the charts!)

So is that all I'm left with? An armour of cynicism to defend myself against the next demand? I feel strongly that levels of salaries like Mr Hood's are quite wrong. But what about mine -10 times as large as the average unemployed. Do I do any more to justify it than the bosses of industry? How do we live with these conflicts? Am I simply a product of my time, reflecting envy for those who have more than me and tight-fistedness towards those who have less? There's too much wrong with the world, there always has been, but I'm getting resentful. Is it up to me to solve it? Must I always feel guilty? Must I always be hassled for money when I go into town to buy my consumables? I want the world back the way it was when I was younger when you could shop without guilt. But perhaps in the end, that's what it's all about. The poverty's come out into the open and is refusing to hide, refusing to let the selfish little bitches get away with it. And perhaps that's a good thing, even if I do hate it.

by Tim Goodrick

This is the continuing saga of my residence in a top floor flat in the Clifton area of Bristol. If new readers find things a little confusing, just give some thought to how I felt staying there for almost eight years. Miss Lee lived in the flat below me and left strange letters on the stairs outside my door. I kept most of them and they are transcribed here verbatim (in fact, the first one in this episode is a photocopy so that all you handwriting experts out there can have a go at a bit of analysis). Contrary to what some people believe (Tommy F.), everything in these articles actually happened. The letters are real.

Part of my duties in running the management company for the flats was to collect the money for the ground rent every six months. Even that simple tasks held unseen pitfalls.

Miss Lee's letter

Dear Mr Goodrick,

Please receipt the bill for ground rent of £8-00. You have not acknowledged the cheque I left outside your door. Mr Addison always did - I showed you what to do - I am very busy sorting things out & cleaning. It seems the usual thief has been in and taken my new 1985 calendar - well this cleaning gives extra work.

The yellow candlewick dressing gown went when at the time Mr Keens the builders were here. ^{But} recently the silver top hat pin, & before that The Silent Epidemic the magazine, I could go on & on & on here

Miss Lee.

McKeans were a building firm we had employed to try to sort out some dreadful problems with the roof, which had more angles than Arthur Daley. Damp was still getting in round the chimney when I left. One good thing the builders did was to become Miss Lee's Prime Suspects.

First Floor Flat

24th November '84

Dear Mr. Goodrick

Thank you for your note __ I can quite understand the water coming in as the rain has been so heavy recently __ I should be obliged if you could kindly let me know when, __ which day or days McKean comes. My relation says empty out the rooms when the builders come! I lost a yellow cotton dressing gown which was in the back room when McKeans were last here and also a navy blue pleated skirt taken from my wardrobe in the front bedroom. I resent this kind of thing going and as I keep my things for 20, 30 years & longer. I miss them when they have been taken. My plated (advertisement) pen knife, which I've had over 40 years I greatly valued. I am quite sure taking other peoples possessions is not the way to get rich __ What a pity the law and commandment is not kept as it should be.

Miss Lee

My lodger had been absent from Miss Lee's letters for some time but was about to get up to his nefarious activities once more. New readers should note that I never actually had a lodger, he was invented by Miss Lee, possibly as her way of accusing me of nasty things whilst pretending she was accusing someone else. I'd sent Miss Lee a note asking for her contribution to the insurance on the flats and apologising for any disturbance my friends and I might have caused with loud music on New Year's Eve.

2 / 1 / 85

Dear Mr. Goodrick,

Enclosed cheque for £66-78 _ the insurance __ No, I did not mind the radio on New Years evening _ My electric was cut off twice about 3 weeks ago _ also I found the electric bulb from electric in hall on the floor _ Do you or your lodger know anything about this?

Yours faithfully

Miss Lee.

Please receipt bill _____

I didn't know what to make of her electricity going off, I could only think that someone in one of the other flats must have pulled the wrong fuse by mistake. I know that more than once I'd turned Miss Lee's water off whilst I was having plumbing done in my flat, there being an utter confusion of stop valves near the front door. The fuse panels were similarly unmarked and confusing.

And now fish knives.....

First Floor Flat

11th February '85

Dear Mr. Goodrick,

A few days ago I went to my hat box, where I have been keeping some knives & forks including silver & bone fish knives & forks. I was shocked that they had been stolen__

Also, around that time a multi flowered linen cloths holder had been taken from my bedroom, which I had put on top of a tea box. __ I have a note (list) of all my belongings, & notice immediately even if a small item has been taken, such as the lining of a bag. __

It is nasty to know that there is a dishonest person about.

Would it be your lodger getting in just for a lark?

I do hope this same person will not do damage to my flat. This way of life, taking other peoples belongings is not the way to get a blessing from the Almighty __ and I hope that this stops.

In great haste,

Miss Lee

P.S.

You must realise that I do need my own things!

A few days later, as I was picking my way carefully through the snow outside the house, trying not to get too much of it into my shoes and hoping that it would melt before I'd have to make an effort to clear it away, a policewoman approached me. She asked if there was a Miss Lee living in the house. I told her yes and which flat she occupied. "Is she a little strange?" I tried not to laugh at the policewoman's question and told her that Miss Lee was indeed a little bit strange. "It's just that she's reported the loss of her knives and forks from a hatbox..." I wished her the best of luck.

Of course Miss Lee wasn't the only strange person living in the flats. Ron, the occupant of the basement flat had been escalating his terror campaign against the American couple who had taken over the ground floor flat when Philippa, the owner, had moved. As far as I knew from speaking to them, the Americans were a very pleasant, quiet couple. Ron must have had different ideas about them. There was many an evening when I'd be sitting in my flat listening to music or watching television, when, suddenly, the whole house would begin to shake. Doors would slam over and over again, there would be much banging accompanied by Ron screaming at the top of his voice. As far as I could tell all the noise was made by Ron. I suspect that the Americans had dared to walk about in their flat. I don't doubt that Ron could hear them, but some noise from neighbours is a fact of life in houses which have been converted into flats and he must have known that.

His actions escalated until one evening he tried to break down the door of the American's flat. The police eventually arrived and cooled the situation down. I learned later that one of the Americans had dropped a book on the floor and it had been this that had set Ron off on his rampage. The Americans moved out shortly after that and the flat was taken over by some probationer policemen. Strangely enough, the whole time they were there there wasn't a single sound from Ron.

The next few letters from Miss Lee were all about the light on the stairs being left on.

She accused me, then my guests, and when I mentioned I'd seen her leave the light on she said that as she returned in daylight, she didn't need to put the light on so it must have been 'someone else'. She then accused the police who had taken over the ground floor flat.

Her stolen items changed from the trivial and hilarious to the serious a few weeks later. One evening I had a visit from a policeman who said Miss Lee had reported her new cashcard missing. She claimed to have been expecting one from her bank and had not received it. I can't remember exactly what questions the policeman asked, but he didn't give the impression of being very interested in his investigation and I wondered whether he'd been told about Miss Lee's other reported thefts and consequently wasn't taking this one too seriously. Miss Lee's next letter arrived shortly after the policeman's visit.

First Floor Flat

21/ 2 /86

Mr. Goodrick I saw a policeman's car outside & believe I heard someone go to your flat _ so I hope something will be done quickly about the entry phone __ It is most inconvenient not to have it working properly. I think someone was here on the morning of the 19th Wednesday as I saw a white dog eating food in the back garden __ obviously it had been put out by from hall floor flat. Regarding my service card __ do you realise that the outer front door is always closed shut and only residents here can go out & come in having their (keys) keys __ so some person here must have taken it from the wire basket & put it where the letters are always placed __ That does not necessarily mean that person was the thief __ It might have been on the white cupboard top for several hours. There have been 2 withdrawals from this BRSTL Horfield Ac I do not think that anyone living in this part would go there unless they were working in that direction __ I would think that perhaps it is the same person people or couple who took my knives forks, nut crackers, tea strainer etc. I do hope that the thief will return my things & that everything will soon be put right.

In haste

Miss Lee.

The entryphone had been out of commission for a while and I'd dug out the doorbell button that had been there when I first arrived (I had removed the button and taped up the wires after we'd had the entryphone installed as people had still been ringing the bell instead of using the entryphone). Miss Lee proves she never misses a trick on that score in her next letter. The white dog belonged to the neighbours and not to any one in the flats. I always tried to keep the front door shut but I think the police in the ground floor flat sometimes left it open when they were expecting people as there had never been an exterior door bell for that flat. Indeed, that was the reason that Philippa, the absent owner of the ground floor flat had been so ready to agree to having the entryphone fitted when its biggest benefit was to save me having to go down four flights of stairs.

Miss Lee might have claimed to have had her nutcrackers stolen but I'm sure she still kept a sledgehammer handy for the subtle approach or perhaps it had completely slipped her mind that I worked in Filton and travelling through Horfield was the easiest way to get there

from Clifton.

18/ 3 /86

Mr. Goodrick

*Could you please kindly tell me where you get the plastic piece of the temporary door bell arrangement. I see that you have now put one up. Its a good idea as the hall floor flat might be empty for some time. I had a bell arrangement and was keeping it put away in a cardboard box but unfortunately a thief (probably the same one has taken it) I do wish this thieving would stop as I find it so upsetting.
From Miss Lee.*

The police had left the ground floor flat during this time and it remained empty for a few months. And now, as promised last time, Miss Lee reveals where the guilty should live.

First Floor Flat

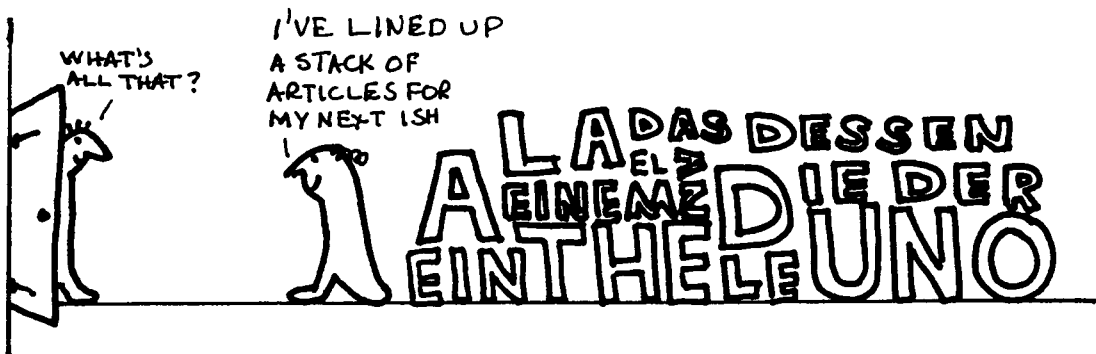
May 16th 1986

Mr. Goodrick,

*A thief has entered my flat once again and taken a multi coloured (squares pattern) cloth which I use as a curtain __ but recently kept covered over my tea trolley to prevent my cat from scratching it __ I am wondering if your lodger heard anything suspicious __ As I expect you know neighbours are advised to look out for one another & so help the crime wave.
In haste Miss Lee.*

The cloth has been in use over 30 years. I hope your things will be protected from being taken by these stupid unhappy people __ If the guilty find it necessary to steal they should live in a place like Bedminster or Horfield.

And there you have it. Next time Ron finds his voice again and we find out where Miss Lee puts her rubber gloves ready for use.



From the Pop Group to Portishead - A Brief Musical History of Bristol by Simon Lake

Draw up a rock 'n' roll map of Great Britain and it's fair to say you might have to dig the microscope out to find Bristol on it. From the Beatles to the Stone Roses, from Echo and the Bunnymen to Oasis, a vast amount of rock 'n' roll culture have spawned from the North-West. London can also stake its claim, via the Rolling Stones, the Clash and in more recent times glam revivalists Suede.

So where does that leave Bristol? Well in rock 'n' roll terms very much on the periphery, but if you examine a broader musical spectrum you soon discover that Bristol has managed over the last 15 years to carve out its own little niche.

So what defines the Bristol sound? Well possibly the most important influence comes via the reggae music imported into the city with its large West Indian population. Whether it's the actual lopping drum and bass sound or simply the relaxed nature of the music and the space between the grooves, elements can be found in much of what has emerged from the city in recent years.

The best place to begin tracking this influence is probably the late '70s when the punk scene gelled into something more complex than tuneless ranting backed by the obligatory three chord guitar sound. One of the most influential post-punk bands were The Pop Group, a Bristol collective based around the demonic and disturbing vocal growl of mainman Mark Stewart. Although their music often made for uncomfortable listening, with its distorted shards of noise and passionate political pleadings, beneath the unsettling surface the band produced a mutant funk that leaned heavily on the use of space and the cut-up qualities of dub that dominated the '70's reggae music.

The Pop Group's radical sound gained a fair amount of media attention and led to the emergence of a small scene of like-minded bands. Perhaps of most note among these were The Thompson Twins, a band that numbered as many as seven in their early incarnation as an experimental pop group with definite ethnic leanings. Early inspiration sadly proved short lived and though, as a three piece, they subsequently had several hit singles in the early '80s, the ethnic sounds largely gave way to bland disco beats.

The Pop Group's apocalyptic musical adventure, unsurprisingly, did not last long, but when the band dissolved several interesting projects emerged from the wreckage. Rip Rig and Panic came closest to commercial success and their singer Neneh Cherry emerged some years later to nurture a fruitful solo career. Working in a similar vein were Maximum Joy, whose blending of soul with modern production techniques offered a primitive blueprint for the success of current Bristol stars Massive Attack. Significantly, tucked away among the band was percussionist Paul Hooper, who later, as Nellee Hooper, became the guiding force behind Soul 2 Soul and producer for Massive Attack.

But this was 1983 and all that was to be a long way off.

The middle part of the '80s seems, in terms of recordings, a lesser era. The Pop Group and its splinter projects had largely disappeared. Mark Stewart was still recording, but his adventures with On-U-Sound guru Adrian Sherwood were too extreme for any commercial recognition (though they broke ground for much of the coming hip-hop scene). A few indie bands flourished briefly around 1986, most notable probably being the Buzzcock stylings of the Flatmates, while the Blue Aeroplanes started out on an enduring but largely unsuccessful career.

By the end of the '80s things started to pick up again. The Rhythmites were producing some classic reggae sounds to shame the anaemic output of Britain's top selling reggae band UB40. Meanwhile around the world the dance scene was beginning to

flourish and Bristol was ready to catch the vibe.

Acid House, Hip Hop, Rave and Techno all came and went in a fast and fluctuating scene, but in Bristol musicians were concentrating on harnessing dance ideas to a more enduring sound. Fresh 4 had chart success with their elegant update of the '70s soul hit 'Wish Upon A Star'. Elsewhere the Wild Bunch collective were providing a launching pad for the emerging talents of Nellee Hooper and core members of the soon to be formed Massive Attack.

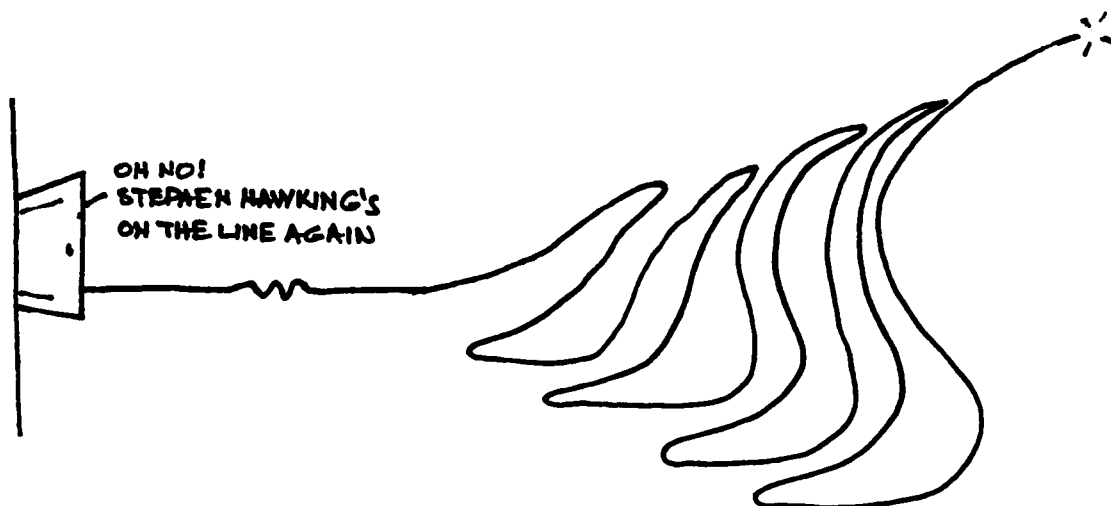
1991 was the year when Massive Attack finally put Bristol on the map. Their LP 'Blue Lines' was a heady brew of soul, reggae and dance, blended in a style that was all their own. Shara Nelson's vibrant soul vocals dominated, but the stately grace of veteran reggae star Horace Andy cemented links with the past. The single 'Unfinished Sympathy' was a huge hit. The Bristol sound had finally hit the bigtime.

Today the music scene is more fragmented than ever. The North-West may cling to its rock 'n' roll roots with the rise of Oasis, but in an era when anyone can make music in their own bedroom for a relatively modest budget, everything is more disparate. Yet dance music continues to be more than a passing fad and Bristol has two of the most feted bands of the moment in Massive Attack and Portishead. Both have released classic albums in 1994.

Influences stretching back to the late '70s and beyond seem finally to have come to fruition.

Selected Discography

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| The Pop Group | - She's Beyond Good and Evil 12"
- Y lp |
| Thompson Twins | - A Product Of... lp |
| Maximum Joy | - Why Can't We Live Together 12" |
| Mark Stewart | - As the Veneer of Democracy Starts to Fade lp |
| Rhythmites | - Integration lp |
| Fresh 4 | - Wish Upon a Star 12" |
| Massive Attack | - Blue Lines lp
- Protection lp |
| Portishead | - Dummy lp |



PARTY CITY

As you may know, Bristol has been designated as the 1995 Sound City (a Radio One concept that means loads of bands turn up during the course of one week and play various venues round town.) What is less well known is that Pam Wells has chosen Bristol as this year's Party City. The lack of blanket coverage for the Party City concept should, of course, not be laid at Pam's door (after all, she lives in Southend and, besides, has Mexicon Hat to publicise), but can perhaps be attributed to Peter-Fred's strange reluctance to have hundreds of unknown fans descend on his house. For within Party City, Peter-Fred's house has been designated Party House, and his drinks collection Party Cocktail Ingredients, to be mixed at will by the Party Cocktail Supremo (Richard).

Party City kicked off its season with a New Year's party which attracted many of the friends of the Bristol group, though not so many of the members themselves who were - variously - away, at other parties, or unwilling to risk the likely retribution from their children the next morning. This illustrates the first rule of New Year Parties which Pam emphasised in the debriefing session - invite people early and invite people often. Still, despite the select turn-out the party showed all the signs of success - music people actually did dance to, a high ratio of champagne bottles per head, and the mandatory complaints about the noise from the neighbours. The New Year toasts seemed to crystallise the party gestalt into flights of wishful fantasies - more money, more holidays, more heating, more sex ("Any sex!" added one Bristol group member, rather wistfully). Resolutions, by contrast, were a bit thin on the ground. Everybody agreed that for one reason or another 1994 had been a bad year, and with the champagne bubbling through the pathways already opened up by the cocktails, all we wanted was the sheer hedonism of imagining that the new year could bring us everything the last one had so conspicuously failed to deliver.

Party City's second gig was in February, a fortnight after MisConstrued, and headlined Tommy Ferguson (visiting Bristol for tax purposes) and Bridget Hardcastle (visiting Tommy Ferguson for purposes we shall not go in to). Support band was Attitude (though without one of their members). The local turnout was better this time - after all what else is there to do in the middle of February? Pam Wells pioneered the water cocktail (water in a cocktail glass with a cherry in it), but suggested that the fanzine should publicise the more alcoholic recipes (the paradigm for which seems to be blue curacao, vodka, orange juice and cream). This was the party where only a few people danced and most people crowded around in the kitchen watching Richard perform, using the new cocktail glasses he had cunningly bought Peter-Fred for his birthday. Some time around three in the morning we'd all adjourned to the living room, where things were getting quite mellow until Tony Walsh took it into his head to start waving a knife around over Richard's not quite comatose form on the floor. I think he was making some point about life, death and getting old, but I'm damned if I can remember what. Still, by a stroke of poetic justice, Richard happened to get his own back on Tony by looming up on him out of the dark in his biker's jacket as Tony attempted to weave his drunken way home.

But who will host the next Party City gig? Pam had it scheduled for one of the May bank holidays, but Peter-Fred has unaccountably decided that he's had enough of his house being Party House and will host no more. So it looks like the end for Party City unless there is someone out there who has nothing better to do than invite a load of fans round to annoy the neighbours, leave behind random pieces of hair apparel and make offensive use of the kitchen cutler. Maybe as an extra incentive we could invite Portishead to play this one?



BALLOON POST

Letters (including those held over from last issue), guest-edited by **Steve Brewster**.

<< Sundry reactions, tales, hints and complaints from our devoted readership. Firstly: the front cover of the Novacon issue... >>

** Steve Green, 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull B92 7LQ.
7 November 1994.

Gee, you don't believe in making it easy to loc your latest ish: a cover logo I can't read, no editorial byline, no current address. You really want your correspondents to work, right?

<< If it's hard to write it should be hard to read too. >>

** Pat Silver, 111 Weston Road, Long Ashton, Bristol BS18 9AE.
29th November 1994.

Hello, and thanks for the copy of - um - the Journal of the Bristol UFO Society. Despite the fact that I have learned the knack of seeing those 3D images, I can't make out what your covers are depicting. Shapes pop into existence, but without the added clues of colour I can't interpret them. Do please put me out of my misery and reveal the design.

<< See last issue... >>

I still recall my astonishment when I first managed to make one of these images work for me. It was a birthday card that Dave's brother sent him, and we both spent ages gazing at it. After several measures of malt whisky I think I must have been sufficiently relaxed and the picture just popped out of nowhere. Dave still hasn't seen it. After some experimentation I found that it is much easier if the light is coming from behind you but not at 90 degrees to the paper.

<< It's the other way round for me: alcohol relaxes me to the point where I decide there's much more kudos in being someone who's never, ever, managed to see the picture. >>

** Bridget Hardcastle, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3 6PX.
4th January 1995.

Thanks for the BoB, I'm assuming that's what it was as I couldn't decipher the covers. I can never tell quickly enough whether those things are real stereograms or fakes to make

you look foolish as you peer at them.

< <I say they're all fakes... > >

The couple of pictures I have managed to see have been disappointing and I'm inclined to think that the time and effort I take to see them would be more productively spent on other things. Having said that, I expect Santa will bring me a book of Magic Eye pictures because I'm a scientist and therefore bound to like such things. (Well, I wrote most of this letter before New Year).

< <Enough of stereograms... and on to alcohol.> >

** Pat

Cider. We now live less than 50 yards from where that elixir of life, Long Ashton Cider, used to be made. Sadly, several years ago the government decided that it didn't want to sponsor something so frivolous as research into cider and perry, so they withdrew all the funding and Long Ashton Cider was no more. The really sad thing is that the Research Station had to grub out all of the fruit trees to make way for work on arable crops, that being deemed to be of value by the Grey Men. I mourn the loss of the trees as genetic material as much as for themselves.

< <'They took all the trees, put 'em in a tree museum / And they charge the people a dollar and a half just to see 'em' - Joni Mitchell.> >

** Bridget

I am envious of those who went on the cider tasting trip. I think of myself as a cider fan but I only like the clear, fizzy, mainstream stuff (like Olde English, but I don't consider Diamond White to be cider). Every time 'real cider' has been offered to me I've found it tastes more like vinegar and not like apples at all so I have been disappointed (and despite my best efforts I can't drink Calvados or Apple Brandy. Boo hoo). Am I drinking the wrong cloudy ciders or is it just my taste for overly sweet drinks foiling my enjoyment of the real stuff? It's so much easier to stick to Baileys - which brings me onto ice cream. Have you tried Baileys on ice cream? Vanilla works very well. When I read Jane Carnell's letter about Haagen Dazs I came over all unnecessary - salivating, making little tongue movements and oscillating my eyebrows (imagine it - you must have seen 'When Harry Met Sally') -

< <I'm imagining it all right, but I'd still like to see it, maybe as a contribution for Confab's Attitude: Live!> >

and I don't even like ice cream that much. I find ice cream unsatisfying, the tastes and textures seem to evade my tongue like a faint aroma of chocolate hovering on the edge of perception. I like my food to overwhelm me. When I do eat ice cream I like it nice and soft, and enjoy the sensuous way it melts in the mouth. Um, that okay for a Hardcastle loc? I seem to have gotten myself something of a Reputation...

< <Can't imagine why.> >

I read Never Quite Arriving 3 << Christina's other fanzine - this was written BEFORE No.3 came out >> voraciously and woke with a burning desire to loc it only to realise that I had dreamed the whole thing, and now that I finally get round to loccing it I've forgotten what it was I was going to write, so Christina's getting no hints as to what to put in it. Sorry! I think I must be getting too much sleep these days, or reading too many fanzines, or both. Could the 7" high stack of papers I took home from Novacon have anything to do with it?

<< Just be thankful you're not dreaming in Iain Banks novels like I am: the night before last I dreamed the (non-existent) scene in Walking on Glass where an elephant sits down on someone, and last night I dreamed that I was Tommy Ferguson working in the Exeter tax office and simultaneously Cameron Colley, narrator of Complicity).

Meanwhile: Tim Goodrick's blockbuster trilogy of tales of neighbourliness brought back memories for Pat... >>

** Pat

I still remember Tim Goodrick's flat-warming party. I didn't think we pogo'd that hard. Miss Lee's obsession with her light reminded me of the time we discovered - with great glee - that one of the electric sockets in the hall of our shared flat didn't seem to be routed through our meter. Naturally that socket sprouted a set of highly dangerous multi-way adaptors that provided heating for all three bedrooms throughout the winter. It turned out that it must have gone through the meter belonging to the landlord, who lived in the ground floor flat and who was astonished at the size of his electricity bill since the only electrical appliances he used were lights. We all pleaded total ignorance and innocence of course. We reckoned that he got plenty of rent from us, and since we were poor, impecunious students, he could afford it more than we could. He was a miserable old f**t too, which made us less than sympathetic to him. Dreadfully dishonest, but I don't feel particularly guilty about it.

<< Some more recent memories from Bridget. >>

** Bridget

A nice bulging bag of contents to the zine; I enjoyed the Wincon report. I always find it interesting hearing someone else's experiences of a con I went to, as the things they remember are usually very different to my memories of the same events, often they seem to have been to an entirely different convention (or is it just different restaurants?). I read the conrep and it all comes flooding back to me, those steep Winchestrian hills, the cavernous dealers cavern and that conversation with Jack Cohen where I pretended to not be embarrassed at all by all that talk about sperm.

<< Which provides a worryingly good link with: >>

** Steve

Steve Brewster's comments regarding my editorial on fanzines at Wincon III were rather bewildering, I must say: 'Steve Green gave a very odd talk on Saturday about why he left

fanzine fandom a while ago: people had sent him fanzines which he didn't like, and which had put him right off zines for ages. Crumbs.'

Just a few points: (1) I never left fanzine fandom, then or since; (2) the thrust of the talk - and the numerous exchanges with audience members - concerned possible reasons, some real, some deliberately tongue-in-cheek, for the drop in fanzine production during the mid-1980s, not my own preferences; (3) rather than being 'put right off zines', I've actively encouraged their production in CRITICAL WAVE, in GAIJIN and in the regular column I've written for the news-stand magazine DARK SIDE since 1990. Er, was Steve actually there, or is he taking the kind of medication which precludes driving and operating heavy machinery?

<< Well, I did say I was taking penicillin throughout Wincon - and Jackie McRobert wondered in Matrix whether my reaction to penicillin had been 'rather favourable'. No such luck, and no chance either to test the only nice side-effect of penicillin - the one Dr. Comfort called the St. Peter's Umbrella.

Err, sorry Steve. Clearly I was going through a miserable phase during your talk and misheard the jokes as serious comments and the exchanges with audience members as quarrels. I really did come away from your talk with the impression that you were disgusted, or at some stage or other had been disgusted, with almost everyone involved in fanzine fandom. Such are the dangers of the spoken word - the first impressions are all there is, and there's no opportunity for the 'does he really mean that?' re-reading. Mea culpa.

One can make notes, of course, as certain memorable individuals did at Wincon; or the speaker might take Pat's advice: >>

** Pat

I like Spinrad's method of deterring over-zealous radio reporters.

<< At Wincon, Spinrad, you may remember, recommended liberal application of the word 'Fuck' as a defence against out-of-context quotes. >>

Many years ago I learned how to deal with 'news'papers which wanted to make a big deal about my going yachting with 11 men. (I sailed on the Atlantic Triangle race in 1974/5). At the start of the interview you simply plonk your own tape recorder on the table, say sweetly 'You don't mind if I keep a record of the interview, do you?' and switch it on.

The articles were, as expected, slanted according to the level of sleaze of the paper, but it keeps them within reasonable bounds and they don't invent things you don't say. I also decided that the tabloids could pay me for my time so when they telephoned to ask for an interview my first question was 'How much?' They all paid without a murmur and it meant I could afford the really good gear I wanted.

<< ...And a few other people's comments now. >>

** Ken Lake at NEW ADDRESS: 1A Stephen Court, Ecclesbourne Road, Thornton Heath, CR7 7BP.

15th December 1994.

[...] Re Tim's spellcheck prob: diplomatic reporter was told by his computer, in re our, er, fine Foreign Sec, 'Do not recognise Hurd, suggest... Turd.'

Tell Peter-Fred the Taiwanese regard China (PRC) as part of Taiwan.

When my late-unlamented wife and I asked taxi-driver to take us to Mongkok (Hong Kong main railway station) he demanded to know why we wanted to go there, offered to take us all the way to Sheung-Shui ('Nice ride, I not charge much'), enquired whether we were married, insisted we should have 'many children,' and generally enlivened our day (well, mine: Jan was not amused, but then she rarely was).

I was going to recommend a marvellous cider but have forgotten maker's name - Dunkerley's? Dunkerton's? Anyway, it's their Kingston Black variety, wonderful stuff. Try and find it - if you can.

< < Poor Brian: the Bristol Group's resident cider expert, having survived the earlier reference to Diamond White, is now reminded of his least favourite cider apple. > >

Brief contrib for favour of... etc. Hope you like it.

'Making a stir'

It may have been at the Cuban Embassy, mercifully I don't recall. I'm there in my official capacity as journalist, wearing name badge upside down so that when idiots come up and say 'Er, excuse me, your name badge is upside down' I can say calmly 'I know'.

On this occasion it's a Foreign Office wallah, the usual nerdish type.

'A-ah, they-ah, tell-me, you're-ah, some-kind-uv-ah, journalist-fella.'

'Ye-e-e-es?'

'Ah, tell-me, how-d'ya-ah, ekshally, ah, see your-ah, y'know, role-in-life, doncher-know?'

[Thinks: O, we 'ave a right wally here.]

'As a wooden spoon, actually.'

He doesn't get the allusion. Wanders away muttering 'Wooden-spoon, fella thinks he's a wooden-spoon...'

I watch as he approaches various friends at the gathering, shakes his head in my direction. 'Fella over there think's he's a, er, wooden-spoon!'

And they look across, nod sagely, and tell him 'Oh yes, that's Ken Lake. Yes, he's a

wooden spoon all right!' Then erupt in guffaws as silly sprog wanders away looking ever more confused.

Well, I mean, you've got to laugh, haven't you? Or you'd do something silly like blowing up the Foreign Office, then where would we be? Probably have someone like that monkey-puppet Cook in charge.

** Janet Stevenson, The Roan Farm, Roweltown, Carlisle CA6 6LX.
1st March 1995.

Thank you for 'Balloons Over Bristol' and 'Never Quite Arriving'. Both arrived yesterday but NQA departed, after perusal fortunately, to the black hole filing system.

[...] CD-ROM of old fanzines. Surely someone, ?Vince Clarke, certainly someone from near Orpington, was planning to start a fanzine library. I think I came back from Mexicon 2 with a leaflet about it, I don't think I've heard of it since but then I've not been around fandom.

< < Rob Hansen's Then records in horrific detail the (earlier) saga of the BSFA fanzine library. > >

I saw a positive review of 'Rastus Johnson's Cakewalk' in a North American fanzine. I sent Greg a postcard requesting it but he never replied. Not much to say on this, it seemed totally devoid of any relevance to my life - which probably says more about my life than anything else. It was mainly like the couple of fanzines you lent me when you were still at Predi, totally outside my frame of reference.

Sympathies over your [Christina's] job situation. I'm currently unemployed, although you'd hardly know it from the amount of time the part-time dyslexia course takes up. Each lesson that I give has to be planned & written up according to official criteria and this is EXTREMELY TIME-CONSUMING. I have yet to start with a primary pupil.

< < As we slowly lower the fire-curtain in front of this issue's lettercol, a "genuine electronic loc" from Bridget: > >

** Bridget
21:00:03, 28th February 1995.

Hello! Blimey, Balloons Over Bristol isn't half coming out frequently, well done y'all. On number 5:

Interesting set of fanzine reviews, though unfortunately Tony Walsh isn't as good at spotting women as I imagine he'd like to think. I don't have the relevant issue of Empties to hand but I know there was at least one other illo of a woman than the one he mentioned (near the back of the zine). Maybe Tony didn't recognise it as female because I didn't draw the breasts large enough.

Of course Christina doesn't go to Novacon to meet men. At a Novacon she's probably met them all before anyway.

Fannish Blind Date sounds a fun idea, and Eileen Weston would be a perfect Cilla (she seems to do it in her spare time anyway). Lots of room for smut. 'I like a man with a large... duplicator.' 'What kind of penetration do you get with your staples?' Ahem.

Um, that's it for now. Good job I locced the last one!

<<And finally...>>

** Janet

Is Bridget Hardcastle a new name for Bridget Wilkinson?

<<No. Hmm. Hang on... has anyone ever seen them in the same room at the same time?...>>

** Christina

27th March 1995

At this point in the proceedings Steve went off to a maths conference in Edinburgh, leaving me to deal with the letters that arrived after his departure. So, here goes in chronological order since I don't want to wreck Steve's themes :

{{By the way, I'll put my comments in curly brackets so you don't get me and Steve confused (we're awfully similar - apart from the beard, of course!) }}

** William Bains, 101 Beechwood Avenue, Melbourn, Royston, Herts SG8 6BW
10th March 1995

Balloons Over Bristol I found irritating because 1) The 'line' illustrations were absolutely terrible and 2) Miss Lee just seems like another confused old biddy, and, whether a real person or not, not really much fun or enlightenment. Dr. Keith Hearne (who he?) is not the first by some decades to disprove the 'dream-in-an-instant' theory - analysis of eye movements and pulse rate changes showed some time ago that you dream events at the same speed as they appear to happen to you. The difference is that a dream can start with a sort of scene-setting activity, your brain convincing itself that it is bored rigid after reading the entire Dune series without actually doing so. This has exact counterparts in waking life, with Bank Traders becoming convinced that they had had decades experience dealing in Futures Options without ever having done so, or indeed even found out what a Futures Option is. Music reviews I find a waste of time because my taste is never the same anyone else's. Or at least, not the same as your reviewer's.

{{Hey, this is great it's about time we got some negative criticism. Let's see, what did you like? The fanzine reviews maybe? }}

Fanzine reviews - I am not sure of the point.

{{Then again, maybe not}}

Reviews by one reviewer that pull together many reviews into a global overview of something are usually pretentious and dull, probably because I am not in the slightest bit

interested in topics like "is the serious fanzine in England as well supported as in Australia" or "are fanzine reviews becoming too self-referential". Your approach had the advantage of novelty, but as I am never going to read any of the zines, is the opinion of your reviewers really useful?

{{No, but was it entertaining?}}

Best would be a scaling system like psychiatrists use to describe how cracked you are. Using internationally agreed standards, fanzine reviewing could be reduced to a few simple numbers: Fannish/mundane, Sercon quotient, abbreviation index, writing level (Microsoft word will tell you how complicated your language is on some sort of numerical scale, although I think I have deleted that part of the software from this program.) Average Reference Date, which tells you when the subject of the average article actually happened, so BOB would qualify for 1992, say, while Mimosa would get 1955. (To be Extra Fannish these dates could be after some quintessentially fannish event, which would allow people to squabble endlessly over what event, and start up dozens of rival dating systems). Average Familial Status, which is a measure of how many people co-habit with the authors (on the basis that people without children, mortgages etc. usually have a quite different outlook on life than people with.) I am sure you can add your own.

{{This is beginning to sound awfully like geek code. But I do like the idea of a scaling system to judge how cracked the editor and writers are! What a lot of trouble that could cause!}}

More usefully, the Melbourn Village library has a little 'guide to books' book. If you find that you like an author, you simply look them up and they suggest a number of authors who write similar types of work that you might also like. It allows you to explore the whole of literature (well, the few thousand bits of it in our portacabin library, anyway) gradually, without taking too many aesthetic leaps. Their coverage of SF is rather patchy - essentially everything is referred back to Ray Bradbury (and someone in the Royston library purchasing department has an unhealthy obsession with L. Ron Hubbard), but the idea is good. How about the same idea for fanzines? How about, for that matter, doing the same thing for science fiction, properly, as a 'fanzine' type effort which we, the ever-generous fannish community, could give to libraries? How about putting it on the Internet? How about Total World Domination? Sorry, I get carried away.

Actually, if any of your readers think that it would be a good idea to build such a directory, not another printed and published 'guide to SF' but a simple, photocopied list of 'if you like X look out for Y', I would be happy to contribute in some way. I can say this in the sure certainty that no-one will ever take me up on it, and half your readership will say 'Oh, God, isn't he naive, that was done in MegaZine 17 in 1948' and so on.

{{As a librarian, naturally, I think this idea is excellent. Maybe it's something the BSFA should be doing instead of worrying about why none of the members want to contribute to their magazines. Of course, if any group wanted to set up the project and needed some finance, they could always consider going to Mexicon Hat for a grant (now how many more plugs can I get in before the end of the letter column, I wonder?) }}

** Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham, London N15 4JU
17th March 1995

I can't think of anything at all to say in response to Balloons Over Bristol, other than that I enjoyed it -- particularly the increasingly loony Miss Lee letters -- but noted that FTT did not feature amongst the fanzines distributed for review. Perhaps this is because it was sent by post rather than handed out at Novacon.... or perhaps it was because its contents looked too forbidding. Or perhaps it was because FTT 16 was particularly boring -- Judith going on about the garden again, the letter column dominated by LETS again, me locked in some interminable exchange about the obscurer aspects of US foreign policy with a far-right eccentric....

{{But you do it so well! I think I did include FTT in the selection I brought down the pub for reviewing, but no doubt consisting of more than five pages and an awful lot of words, they thought better of it. }}

The next issue will be much better -- Judith completed her article before jetting off to Australia, the letter column has been assembled, and I am labouring on another slab of theory. Assuming no hiccups, we may even be able to distribute copies at the Duckland Eastercon -- the first time we will ever have distributed a fanzine at a convention. (It may even be the last too.) And if we run out of copies, we'll be able to go home and get some more -- indeed, we'll be going home every night anyway, thus saving vast amounts of money on hotel bills. But we still won't be going to the Worldcon...

{{Shame! Then you will miss out on the amazing evening fan room programme devised by Lilian Edwards and me, featuring Lurve Night, the Dune cocktail party, Have I Got a Fandom for You, and much more. (Good, there's another one) }}

**Steve Jeffery 44 White Way, Kiddlington, Oxon OX5 2XA
28th March 1995

I seem to have come in on the Miss Lee letters part way through a sequel (of sorts). Still very funny, though - maybe not to Tim, if he has to live with this day after day. I have a vision of Miss Lee from this as a lady of indeterminate age and hairdo, sitting writing endless letters in a room that looks like a cross between a dragon's hoard and the aftermath of a jumble sale. All those 'stolen' items hiding under bureaus, down behind the sofa cushions, lurking at the bottom of cupboards and drawers.. Where does she find enough room to lose all this misplaced trivia? perhaps, unlike us, she does not collect books. Or perhaps there really is a thief, parading around the streets of Clifton in a yellow cotton dressing gown and slippers, fetchingly set off by a green Merino blanket draped across the shoulders, and clutching a pale blue plastic colander. I'm sure I would think twice about accosting such a desperate (and satorially challenged) villain.

{{Fortunately for Tim he doesn't now live in the same house as Miss Lee. And as far as I can recall I've never seen him wear a colander.}}

I can't say much on the music reviews, since I don't think I've heard of any of these bans. Maybe the Prodigy, but I can't recall. Maybe I don't spend enough time in my bedroom making weird noises. (Shall we rephrase that? No.. Stet.) However, I suspect you in turn (possibly thankfully) have never heard Umbra et Imago, Sopor Aeternus or

Dronning Maud Land. This is the sort of stuff that gets sent to us well meaning, but possibly misguided, Euro-goths. Not my sort of stuff either, but then my musical tastes seem to have fossilised as of the later 70s with only occasional enthusiasms thereafter (currently Belly, Elastica, Curve, Sheila Chandra)

{{You're right, never 'eard of 'em - though I am partial to a bit of Belly and Elastica.}}

Four Leggings and a Fumarole

A rather better hit rate on the fanzines. The only one I haven't seen is Lilian's The Wrong Leggings. I detect a certain reticence among your reviewing team, vying with each other for the slimmest zine (you should make the wordcount for reviews inversely proportional to the size of the zine. Then they can all fight over Habakkuk instead).

{{Make, she says wistfully. Make. No I don't think so - it's hard enough to get people to do things even on a voluntary basis.}}

I thought the D West fan-art piece one of the best things in Lagoon (the other highlight was Simon's non-linear, fractured postmodern Novacon report, which captured the strange dislocation of convention fandom better than anything I've read for a long time).

Oh dear, that's rather compromised my comments on your own Novacon report here. I hope all that Lagoon artwork wasn't done by D West as Lilian - or Simon - claims (but the horrible suspicion remains), as that rather negates the cartoon I sent to Simon after Lagoon 6. This Novacon, I thought, was a good natured relaxacon. I don't think I made it to much more than the Graham Joyce speech, ending in Graham's hilarious Zorba the Greek pastiche. We left, perhaps wisely, before the Sunday Beer and Sausage tasting. Are you sure about the Jerusalem Artichoke? What did the sausages taste of then?

{{Sausage, mainly. Despite the many flavoured menu.}}

Mostly, I spent a lot of time sitting at one table chatting to people, occasionally moving across to a different table to talk to another group of people. Almost everybody else seemed to be doing the same, except those who appeared superglued to the bar. I wonder just how much interaction there is between different groups in conventions like this, or do you just go to meet up with friends for a weekend, and then all go home again. In my more neo-ish days, I would have felt rather unsatisfied about coming away from a con having seen almost none of the 'real' program. Maybe I've had the sercon edges knocked off a little, or I'm just slowing down - or getting more blase about it. I didn't come away from Novacon feeling I'd missed anything; it just seemed to fit the mood of this particular Novacon. Next year, on its 25th, it might feel a little different. Who knows?

{{Will any of us even be alive then in the empty void of the post-Worldcon world (or to be more realistic, will any of us still be solvent? And talking of solvents, why not try... No, I can't do it. Not product placement. It can't have come to that. I know things are tough, but we do have standards here in Bristol. Which is why I am going to declare the letter column well and truly closed, before Steve sees it and wonders why I've wrecked his elegantly crafted letter column with my burblings. }}

April 1995

Bristol

