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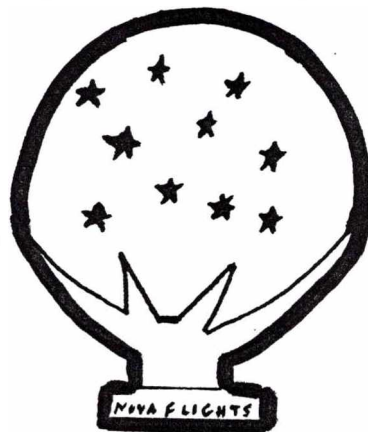
## BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL 9

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**BALLOONISTS SCOOP NOVAS** in shock poll result that rocked fandom following an unprecedented wave of ballot stuffing. "I forgot to vote," admitted one Leeds fan who begged to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals. "Fanzines from the South West of England never win," confided another spokesman. "I'm not sure how we let this happen." Jubilant Bristol fans celebrated their victory by drinking cider into the small hours of the morning and playing records by the Wurzels. "I never realised that Miss Lee was so popular," admitted bashful Tim Goodrick. "I think some people voted for us because they like our material," added editor Christina Lake. "But most of them did it for the free drinks."

In a further shock, frontrunner Attitude was disqualified following the discovery that almost half its votes were from fakefans whose names turned out to be anagrams of Pam Wells. "That was Richard's idea to discredit the opposition," said Christina. "This *is* off the record, isn't it? Our main fear was that the Nova administrator wouldn't notice and count them as genuine votes."

Future plans for the Nova award-winning fanzine are unclear. "We might go weekly," said Steve Brewster, "after I've finished my PhD. Or we might sell the title to the Japanese." Whatever the future holds for the buoyant Bristolians, one thing is certain, no-one will ever let Steve play his Wurzels record again.



Hang on a minute. That's not a Nova, that's a balloon!

## Balloons Over Bristol 9

### Who needs a Nova? - Editorial

It seems to me unreal that we have completed six issues in a year. Yet it's true that it's much easier doing a frequent fanzine than one every two years. But what I'm really pleased about is the way that Balloons Over Bristol has become a co-operative effort, not just between members of the group (notably Tim, Steve and Simon) but also from letter writers like Dave Harwood, Steve Jeffery and Bridget Hardcastle. I know that we have not garnered the mass response of such fanzines as Attitude, but as letter column editor I must admit to preferring a small volume of good quality response than a heavy sackload of mail that turns the job of editing into a chore. I also suspect that our mailbag is at about the right level for the material we run - not much requires in depth response, except perhaps my article last issue on American fanzines.

Does frequency merit award? Yes, I've run a Nova award cover, but apart from the rather unsnappy slogan - "We've published more issues than Attitude" - I can't see much of a campaign base. Balloons Over Bristol has always been a project based on what we as a group enjoy, and although I have tried to distribute it as widely as possible (within the limitations of the organisational disabilities mentioned last issue), and although we did run a fanzine review column and various convention reports, this has never had any pretension to being in any way central to British fandom or engage with a specific scene. If there has been any ambition, it has been that anyone should be able to pick up a copy and find something they enjoy reading within it, without necessarily having too much background knowledge. The music slant is also something which pushes the central focus away from fandom and its concerns and into areas of general interest which fans may or may not wish to hook into.

Besides, on the basis of frequency, presumably Zorn would have to win the Nova next year (assuming Mike Scott sticks to his project - which I'm sure, being an efficient and purposeful fan, he will.)

So, what should we be voting for in the Novas? Well, a new issue of Attitude is due as I write, so I suppose I should suspend judgement on this fanzine. But what the hell! Attitude has always set out to be admirably catholic, and has succeeded in drawing in people from all corners of fandom. It has also published some good material, while maintaining a personality that often gets lost in large genzines. Why do you suspect a but coming? (Is it my now never to be forgiven prejudice against large fanzines?) I admire Attitude, but sometimes feel there is something too efficient and contrived about it (yes, efficient must be the word I use for all projects emanating from ex-Cambridge fans). Why should the fact that editors take a professional view of producing their fanzine effect my response to their output? There's nothing wrong with sticking to deadlines, commissioning articles, carrying out policy - good god, isn't that what I do with Balloons Over Bristol (they all hate me, the week after the fanzine comes out, it's - what are you doing to do for the next issue then, guys?) . So what am I saying? Attitude is brilliantly well distributed, accessible, inventive in its use of writers. Give it a Nova. Just don't complain if it seems that bit too pre-planned.

But, there is more than one Nova. What about writers? Who has impressed me this year? Well, when Simon Ounsley was filling out his Nova form last year, and placed Alison Freebairn and Kelpies Pool on his ballot, I must admit I most uncharitably assumed that

he was responding to some kind of hype, and laughed at him. But then, I was just judging by Alison's title, and boy, what a mistake that was. Now I've finally made it on to her mailing list, I can tell you that Alison is one seriously good writer. Obviously she should be writing for *Balloons Over Bristol* as her main subject area is music rather than fandom, but just read her piece on Kurt Cobain in the *Timebytes* fanthology and you will see what I mean. (Was that 1994/5? I don't know. I guess there weren't as many stand out pieces in Alison's latest issue of *Kelpie*, but she's still worth considering. And check out her piece on the Blur/ Oasis wars in the latest *Wrong Leggings*.) And talking of *Leggings*, Lilian Edwards remains one of my favourite writers. Okay, so there wasn't as much of Lilian in the latest issue as there usually is. Try *Leggings 2* (published last Novacon) if you want a more thorough flavour of Lilian's concerns, running from the TAFF to her experiences of Prague architecture. The big *genzine* issue of *Leggings* (No 3) is good too, though it had to work hard not just to be merely a showcase for the Simon Ounsley Novacon report. Now, this was an enjoyable piece of writing, but skirted very close to the line of being a parody of Simon doing convention reports, containing perhaps too much on breakfast and convention insecurity and too little on anything other than what Jackie McRobert was doing and how traumatic breakfast can be. Mere rote work for Simon. If you want to see what this man can really do, then turn to *Lagoon 7* and read the article on his friend Richard. I wouldn't recommend long years of illness to anybody, but if you want to see the fruits of staring at the ceiling and really thinking through your life, then read this article. Simon ought to be commissioned to write his autobiography. This really works in conveying both a sense of time (the late 70s) and place (Leeds, England) and the concerns and personalities of the people involved. The only criticism I have is that while Simon is consciously writing about his friend Richard, his main narrative thread is his search for a girlfriend, and this just isn't resolved. Simon, we need the follow-up! As to part II, and the weird stuff about him and the dead Richard, well take this as you find it. It may or may not fit in with your philosophy of life, but for one, like me, who finds any experience of this nature fascinating and almost too compelling, then it doesn't detract from the previous part. So, much as it hurts me to recommend giving a Nova to someone who has already won it (after all, if it is rotated long enough, then I might get one too one day), I feel that with that piece, Simon Ounsley became my standout writer of the year.

Art? Well, I don't do that, so I guess we better give it to D West for all his painstaking work on hoaxing us in Lagoons. Of course, what I would really like to recommend for a Nova is *Timebytes*, the fanthology that Lilian and I produced for *Intersection*. I don't even know if fanthologies, available only for purchase are eligible (though it did go free to a large portion of fandom via the contributors copies) and I don't think it's particularly cool to plug your own product. But I do feel proud that we have produced a structured overview of the last eight years of fandom that is both a good read (featuring loads of articles by people like Nigel Richardson, Dave Langford, Abigail Frost and Simon Ounsley) and a reference work for anyone wishing to approach fandom and life in the late 80s/ early 90s. Of course, as soon as Joseph Nicholas's hard-hitting review appears in *Matrix*, all these claims will be rapidly deflated and we will have to crawl away to hide the copies till it is miraculously reassessed by American fanzine fans in the 2020s who will wine and dine Lilian and I on the strength of it at conventions from Las Vegas to Acapulca, and we will die happy (and drunk) celebrities.

Who needs a Nova?

## CONTRAFLOW

### An Intersection Report

*Balloons Over Bristol sent its crack team of reporters up to Glasgow to comment on Intersection. We begin in a very budgetary vein with Steve Brewster trying to prove that Intersection was, of all things, cheap!*

*(Participants in order of appearance : Christina Lake, Steve Brewster, Lilian Edwards, Richard Hewison, Pete Binfield, Amanda Kear, Peter-Fred Thompson, Keith Martin)*

Christina

Steve, did your plan to enjoy Intersection, as outlined in the previous issue, actually work?

Steve

I wasn't enjoying Intersection much until the Friday - when I realised that the convention was costing me rather less than I'd expected. I'd thought the flat Pat McMurray had booked was going to cost us £70 each for the week. In the event, it cost £30 each. I'd joined the convention when it had cost £50; another £50 for train travel, plus about £20 over the weekend for taxi fares. Call it £150 for the 'getting there' cost, the money needed merely to attend for the five days; and compare to the analogous costs for a London Eastercon - say £80 for accommodation, plus say £25 membership, plus £30 quid train fare at the idle student bastard rate. Intersection was twice as long a convention for slightly more money. Yes, on-site food was a rip-off, but it was also an excuse to eat well in the evenings: being charged £3 for a small portion of mediocre food at lunchtime makes it much easier to spend £15 on a big and very good meal later on without feeling profligate.

Christina

Maybe that's why no-one came to eat the cheap food Lilian had organised at the Central for the evening. The sausage casserole was wonderful on the first night - pity they were then forced to carry on trying to sell it for the next five evenings!

Steve

Obviously the drinks weren't cheap either. Nearly 2 quid for a Guinness, but I pay only slightly less at The Ship in Bristol. There were lots of nice things to buy at Intersection, but I didn't *have* to buy them. Actually I don't think I bought anything in the dealer's room, apart from a few tickets at the BSFA 'It Could Be You (Reading A Really Crap Novel On The Train Home)' tombola. I bought the Quandry reprint edition from Greg's / Spike's / Catherine's table in the fan lounge, and the D. West collection and some miscellaneous stuff. I picked up a large quantity of fanzines free from the Memory Hole table, rationalising this by telling myself I could always recycle them via the Novacon fanzine table.

So I ended up treating Intersection as a long Eastercon. By which I mean I didn't try to work out a new strategy for dividing my time between the various attractions; I just drifted around (perhaps more so than at an Eastercon - I'm here for five days, what's the hurry?) and was far happier than I had been at Confabulation, the convention which I'd most like to attend again because due to my foul temper, poor state of health and temporary generalised misanthropy it was wasted on me, even though at the back of my

mind I knew good and exciting things were happening all around.

Christina

What about your intention of meeting All Those Fascinating Foreign Fans?

Steve

It never happened to any great extent. Perhaps it was never going to happen: when meeting large numbers of people simultaneously, my conversation is even worse than usual. I had originally intended to distribute a short fanzine to the masses at Intersection; but no-one would have been terribly interested, and I don't like thrusting bits of paper into people's faces, and I think now (post Confabulation) that giving fanzines to people personally is only a good idea if you know them quite well - for those people you only 'recognize' by their name-badges, mailing it to them is probably better.

Christina

I know what you mean. Sometimes it seems intrusive or even presumptuous to impose your fanzine on someone. Though I don't seem to have that problem with Balloons Over Bristol, probably because of it being the group's zine, not just mine! Though I did feel a bit nervous giving a copy of the last issue to Ted White. I really wished I'd never written all those pages about big American fanzines. It's all very well to sit in your garden and write all this stuff in the comfortable knowledge that the people in question are hundreds of miles away across the Atlantic; it's quite another thing to confront them with it in person. Actually, Ted was quite sweet. He said that, obviously, he didn't agree with all I had said about him and Blat!, but he would write me a letter about that after the con. But at least he seemed pleased that someone had taken the time to do a proper review of his fanzine. And he said that he agreed with what I wrote about Habbakuk! So, on the whole I didn't feel too bad after all. The person who really gave me a hard time about it was Frank Lunney. He challenged me over the Blat! archives being a waste of space. Well, it turned out that the last archive reprint had been Frank's fanzine (which, of course, I hadn't read) and when I said I didn't see the point of printing past its sell-by date material from 20 year ago, he told me that his fanzine was full of really cool stuff like the Greg Benford article on being propositioned for blow jobs on the beach in California. I had to admit that was not quite my image of old time fanzines! So, what did you pick up from the Memory Hole fanzines, Steve? Anything unmissable?

Steve

Some interesting old pre-electronic-era Ansibles; some of the big fat fanzines that you were not too impressed with (I felt that they were good, but a bit repetitive and sometimes - for all their wonderful duplication and fine artwork - juvenile in unexpected ways; one fears that the editors still believe that Fans are Slans); miscellaneous old British stuff (a Saliromania, a Nutz, some Mavericks, etc.).

Christina

Not to mention the D West tome, which I helped persuade you to buy. But let's not talk about anthologies! I started the convention so stressed out, mainly from finishing off the Time Bytes fanthology, that it's a wonder that I made it through the first day. In fact, I actually started to feel LESS tired as the convention progressed, even though I was keeping the usual late hours. What do you reckon, Lilian, does this mean I wasn't doing my share of work for the evening fan programme? Or do you think our plan for a low maintenance at con input actually worked out?

Lilian

Low maintenance con input? I think you must have been at a different convention than me! Didn't we spend most of Thursday night tearing round trying to find panellists and buy them apologetic drinks because the programme database hadn't sent them any confirmation letters or put them on the pocket programme? Didn't I spend most of Friday sorting out parties and most of Saturday inventing bad punchlines for Have I Got Fandom For You? Not that I'm complaining, really. I enjoyed inventing (and helping to run) HIGNFY hugely, and it gave me a real buzz when it turned out to be a big success. But low maintenance?? Didn't look that way to me, chum. Don't you remember when we spent so long persuading Kari's crew to come in and take part in the Sex in Fandom panel (Kari was too busy preening in her rubber dress!) that by the time we finally made it Eileen Gunn (the chair) had organised a whole alternative set of participants from the audience. Agh!!! By Sunday I was so tired it required actual intellectual effort just to manoeuvre down stairs.

Christina

Actually, now you come to mention it, I do remember a hell of a lot of time spent hanging around the SECC green room, trying to wheedle drinks vouchers out of Jackie Gruter Andrews. And the joys of typing and reproducing a simple form for question time when the newsletter team was in action all around me. And trying to convince all the programme participants to buy their own drinks pro-tem when Greg Pickersgill went out to dinner with all our drinks vouchers. Not to mention the trauma of the parties... But at least I didn't have to spend all day selling bloody T-shirts to oversized Americans like I did at Conspiracy.

By the way, I suspect your difficulty in manoeuvring down stairs on Sunday had more to do with staying up late Saturday night in the Ailsa bar with a bunch of people who were so drunk or stoned that they thought passing round a balloon to wear on their heads was the height of hilarity!

Lilian

Well, it wasn't just ONE balloon. There were quite a lot of them, and amusingly intertwined too. Yes, well, alright, that may have been the night I sat on John Berry's lap for two hours drinking Baileys while Geri Sullivan successively rolled around on the floor with Dave Langford and then persuaded some mad Scotsman to play caterwauling bagpipes for the duration, even after the bar staff had thankfully gone home and we were reduced to drinking whisky stolen from Jack Heneghan's room. (Did she pull him in the end?) But you're hardly one to talk: the next night I gave up in exhaustion when the parties had only barely got going and so missed an alleged small hours encounter between yourself and a man of a Pennsylvanian persuasion with a great deal of dope on his person. Has this got anything to do with why you're going to America for a fortnight next week, by the way?

Christina

What, the dope? No. You know me, I'm more likely to elope with a bottle of wine. Besides, aren't we meant to be discreet about these illicit substances and talk euphemistically of sidebars? As I recall, you were well in on the sidebars scene.

Lilian

Well, a bit. It was lovely to meet so many Americans all in one place, and feel in on the

fool crowd, but as a lifelong non (tobacco) smoker and abuser of predominantly alcohol, I found the learning curve involved in getting high rather steep, and tended more to sore throats than cosmic insights! I also felt a little like I was being allowed into the American crowd as a quaint Anglo curiosity (along with a few other prime exhibits like Greg Pickersgill, Martin Smith and you of course) - maybe it's fond recollection but I felt UK and US fans were actually more integrated at Conspiracy than at Intersection. With some obvious exceptions of course: Geri Sullivan (cf abover) certainly seemed determined to mingle as did the wonderful Nevenah, who gave me the best lesson I've ever had on how to scope the best (or only) good looking man at a party, engage him in conversation, and ensnare him, all in ten minutes flat! After that, what could I do but invite her on to the Romancing the Internet panel?

Christina

While we're on the subject of evening entertainment, maybe Richard can tell us which were the best parties? For example, Friday night you must have found a source of pretty damn good alcohol, otherwise you wouldn't have been "getting on down" at the disco quite so enthusiastically!

Richard

Yes, well, I had quite a bit of the Sorensen punch, not to mention 80 proof Polish fruit liqueur.

Christina

Oh, you mean the champagne cocktails served after Dune. But where did you get the Polish fruit liqueur?

Richard

From my hip flask. Yes, that was a pretty good evening. That was the night they had the wedding party in the usual fan room, wasn't it?

Steve

Yes. And that was the night when Mike Siddall sat down in the corridor outside the Norwegian party, drunkenly pointing at fat Americans, going: "He's so *fat*. He's so fucking *fat*. Jesus, I've never seen anyone so *fat*. (Swigs from bottle) Christ, how did he get so *fat*..."

Richard

Yes, it was definitely Friday night when I was talking to Tommy McClellan. He was lusting after one of the guests at the wedding. His big moment came when the main bar closed and she came and propositioned us for our room key so she could carry on drinking. Pity that her boyfriend was with her!

Lilian

I never knew about that. That must have been when Geri was dragging me off to a sidebar!

Richard

That was the main advantage of staying in the Central. As soon as the bar closed, residents became incredibly popular. You just had to go to the bar, and people thrust money into your hand. I've never bought so many drinks for total strangers before! I

don't think the bar staff liked it much, but someone said that they weren't being paid after 11 or 12 in the evening, so you can't really blame them.

Christina

Surely, if they weren't being paid, they simply wouldn't work? Mind you, when we were all keeping the Central bar open on the Monday night, we did tip them pretty heavily each round. Frank Lunney gave me twenty pounds to buy drinks and told me to tip them the change, but since the round only came to just over a fiver I couldn't bring myself to do it! I gave them the change from ten pounds instead, and told Frank to buy some more drinks later. I guess we British just haven't got the hang of tipping properly. Or can't bear to see our drinking money disappear too quickly - particularly at those bar prices.

Pete

The best party I went to just had to be the Head Freezers party. Not well attended by any means but the Cryonics peoples have a long way to go on their PR work.

We had walked in, expecting glass jars and liquid oxygen - instead the room was bare. One Headfreezer stood in a corner looking ill and nervous, there was a selection of Alcor literature (and Articles by Platt), a long table with assorted munchies, a table with NON-ALCOHOLIC drinks on and, the windows were wide open. Now, this being the start of winter in deepest Scotland, the room was absolutely freezing leading to considerable speculation that they were trying to save on the LOX and start the cryonic process there and then (they do say you should still be alive when frozen).

The nervous man in the corner made no move toward us, he just stood there popping pills and sipping energy drinks - we satisfied ourselves with the Cherry-ade. A couple of groups stuck their heads round the corner before realizing they were in the wrong place and before long, the chill got to us, and we began to come to the same conclusion. Grabbed loads of literature, more Cherry-ade, some munchies and made our excuses.

The second best party was the one where I ate the cigar - but that's a different story entirely (I still get Tobacco flashbacks you know).

Christina

You ATE a cigar? No, maybe we shouldn't go into that one. Richard, you still haven't told us which party had the best drinks.

Richard

The Fans Across the World Party on Saturday, without a doubt. Those Russian vodkas were amazing. Well, maybe not the one that tasted as if it had been charcoal filtered. But the selection was amazing. Not to mention the Estonian white port, which wasn't white, may or may not have been port, but was most definitely Estonian. Well, you sure as hell couldn't get it at Oddbins!

Christina

Let's get away from the subject of drink for a moment. Amanda, as our resident coke drinking, maybe you can give a different perspective. What did you spend your time doing?



Amanda

My first major obstacle to overcome was getting \*in\* to the SECC. Those nice people at Glasgow Uni had supplied me with a much better map than any of the PR or tourist board ones, but it unfortunately didn't have the roads round the SECC marked as "pedestrian unfriendly". Thus the quickest route by map, involved prowling round the outside of the fence, pawing pathetically at the chainlink every now and then. This is obviously a common behaviour in conference attendees, as an American gentleman and I found a large hole in the fence at just about the point where we were both getting frustrated enough to consider climbing over. On subsequent days I used the giant "hamster tunnel" for access. (Aha! Perhaps it was the giant hamster which had chewed the hole in the fence in the first place!)

Christina

Yes, I came in via the Hamster tunnel on my first venture over to the SECC, having used public transport, rather than the twice as expensive buses laid on by the convention!

Amanda

Once safely inside I spent the first day or so (Thurs eve & Fri morning) wandering around in a daze, being boggled at the size of it all and suffering from bus lag (this is similar to jet lag, but costs less). The shock of seeing rain for the first time in two months may also have adversely affected my thought processes, but at least confirmed that I had safely arrived in Glasgow.

Thereafter I spent a lot of my time attending panels on... um... er... lots of things which temporarily escape me. Comics were involved though. And Babylon 5. And biology. And roleplaying. Thog's Fliegenklatsch was a definite favourite, along with "Is fantasy killing SF?". The former proved that each is quite capable of killing off their own genre without outside help, whilst the latter very quickly strayed off subject and became a fascinating discussion of the state of the publishing industry today.

Steve

My best discovery about the programme was how nice it is to be on a panel. You go to the green room, ask for a gin and tonic, the gopher upends the bottle into your glass, without asking you when to say stop, and then they hand you a microphone and let you talk!

Lilian

Of course, some Americans complained that they were only given an option to drink when they really wanted coffee!

Christina

I had a really good time my one panel over at the Moat House. No-one turned up so Simon Ounsley, Janice Gelb and I had a very enjoyable conversation (in fact, on subject), whilst drinking the drinks kindly supplied by the convention, sitting in the empty room (with heart-breakingly good acoustics) where the panel should have been! While somewhere else, no doubt, a roomful of enthusiasts strained to hear their favourite writers battle it out with the stentorian egotists on the next panel!

We ought to bring Peter-Fred in here, since he seemed to spend all his time at the convention going to the programme. What were the high-points for you?

Peter-Fred

Delany. Probably the best item was the one with him and Joe Haldeman talking about autobiographical books, which was particularly interesting for me since I was reading "The Motion of Light in Water" at the time. Delany and Haldeman each provided both general insights and anecdotal stuff, which made the whole thing fascinating. On the other hand Delany's GoH speech was very much as a literature professor rather than an SF writer, and I could really do with a printed copy to remember precisely what it was about!

Christina

I expect there would have been a flash of revelation as he wove all his themes together - if only Tina Hewett hadn't wound him up early!

Peter-Fred

Other high points for me were Robert Forward's talk on space propulsion and Jack Cohen's on his book with Ian Stewart on chaos and reductionism. Forward was a very entertaining speaker, and presented a pretty convincing case that rockets are not the only (and probably not the best) way to get into and through space. I was personally very attracted to a whacky scheme using synchronised rotating 'strings' to transport payloads from low Earth orbit to the surface of the Moon without any energy input, provided an equivalent quantity of Moon rock was sent the other way! Jack Cohen was equally entertaining, and more scientifically convincing than I've often seen him, though I admit I had a soft spot for this work since Ian Stewart was one of my math lecturers back in the dim and distant past.

Christina

Of course you weren't just a spectator - you very bravely volunteered to participate in parts of the evening fan programme.

Peter Fred

Yes, I was an extra Frank Herbert in "Dune: The Sand of Music" (probably the most fun - or even funniest - part of the programme), and a 'contestant' in Fannish Blind Date, where, despite wearing my goth leather-and-chains outfit, I was entirely upstaged by Simo wearing a blond wig and dressed as a woman. His being chosen by the Vulcan Ambassadors as her mate was one of those sublime moments that deserve to go down in convention history (not to mention the fact that this was yet another occasion for Martin Smith to not get laid).

Christina

And I don't think Mike Siddall will ever forgive me for not telling him there was a step when I led him up to the stage blindfolded for his blind date round! Still, it did give him a chance to grovel histrionically at our feet!

Peter-Fred

High points did *\*not\** include straining to hear the panel in one of the subdivisions of the infamous Hall 3, nor the Masquerade, which required sitting for a long time on *\*very\** hard seats in order to see a not terrifically impressive set of costumes (although the very last one - the Wild Hunt - was worth waiting for).

Christina

Any other highlights from you, Amanda?

Amanda

Let's see. The misprint in the programme guide which read "Wizards of the Cost". A prize to that typesetter for his acute observation! Finding out that there are going to be 4 more books in Michael & Kathleen Gear's North American Prehistory/ Archaeology series. Yaaay! Spending too much money in the dealers room. Meeting up with lots of people I hadn't seen for months and catching up on all the gossip, whilst listening to them complain about how awful the beer was then drinking the bar dry anyway.

Richard

See, you can't keep drink out of it, whoever you talk to!

Amanda

Or food, come to that. We ate lots of curries. Full marks to Glasgow for dirt cheap food and buckets of it. I have fond memories of Keith reading a menu and muttering "There are types of curry I've never heard of here... There are \*parts of India\* I've never heard of here..."

Christina

Yes, what *was* Keith doing all the time? Every time I saw him, he seemed to be sitting out in the concourse, engrossed in conversation.

Keith

It was Hall 4, actually. A group of about twelve of us seemed to jointly own a table in the bar there. Not that any of us was there all the time, but there was usually a selection in residence in a sort of random rotation, so this was my default location. (This would have been a little better if the beer hadn't been quite so naff.) This arrangement tended to tie things down past close of play at the SECC, with the result that I missed most of the evening programme, only arriving at hotels (after food, etc.) in time for late parties.

Christina

The main drawback must have been being stuck with the rather dire selection of drinks they served at those mobile portacabins they were trying to foist off on us as bars. Was there actually anything worth drinking, or did you have to save yourself for the parties?

Keith

No, I can't honestly say that the beer in the SECC was worth drinking. However, with no alternatives in sight this didn't actually stop me drinking it. To be fair it was undistinguished and not actively unpleasant but there were limits to how much of it I could take. A pity they couldn't have managed something better (apart from the heavily overpriced 70/- upstairs) - something like the real ale bar that most Eastercons try to get.

Christina

I suppose we should be thankful that the committee managed to get us beer at all.

Keith

Actually one of the most astonishing aspects of recent postings on the net has been some Americans saying how great the beer at the SECC was and how they wish they could get

it at home. This has to be one of the saddest aspects of American culture I've ever heard.

Christina

Probably as sad as Lilian discovering that she liked beer, providing it was American Budweiser!

Keith

One terrible new development that happened at this Worldcon was a creeping exhaustion that had me in bed most nights by 2:00. Gone are the days of yore when I could do a full con (Brighton in '87 springs to mind) on less than an hour's sleep a night.

Christina

I never could! Even when I stayed up all night at Nolacon and saw the sun rise over the Mississippi I had to go to bed for the statutory four hours or so of sleep after (and Lilian didn't even ask me who I spent the night with!). This convention I mostly just followed my normal practice of staying up till I was too drunk/bored/tired to enjoy myself any more, then crashed. Sacrificing breakfast can do wonders for your convention sleep patterns (and save you five days of carbohydrate overload). It also helps if you can sleep through any potential hangover...

Richard

Like the one I had Saturday morning.

Christina

But I bet *you* got up for breakfast!

Richard

Well, I'm not going to waste something I've paid for! Anne Wilson came up to me that day and blamed me for her hangover too. She seemed to think I had been encouraging her to drink too much of the liqueurs at the Norwegian party.

Christina

As if she needed encouragement. Still it's good to have someone to blame. But, look, we're talking about drinks again! Let's bring in our newest members Pete and Sue Binfield. Sorry, Pete, I should have introduced you earlier. You and Sue voodooed me at the convention to ask about the Bristol SF group. Before you went to Intersection, you had no idea that a Bristol SF group even existed. Don't you find it bizarre that you had to travel hundreds of miles to Glasgow to discover something that existed on your own doorstep?

Pete

I could take the opportunity to grumble about lack of publicity in my home town, or the quiet unassuming nature of local pub groups but no, not for I the humdrum answer. Instead I should like to take the opportunity to introduce you to the WWWF - the World Wide Web of Fandom. In actual fact, upon arriving in Glasgow we found out about the Bristol SF group from three separate and unrelated sources! It really is quite impressive - the sub-culture that is fandom - every one knows everyone else and, if they don't, then they sure as hell know a thing who does. Sue and I once saw one of those Motorworld TV programs - they were in a field somewhere with hundreds of people who all got together regularly and played their car stereos at each other - the louder the better! A Car

Stereo Convention - quite the most bizarre thing I have ever heard of and yet.... for the uninitiated an Sf con must seem somewhat the same.

Christina

Especially to those in Hall 3.

Pete

I think, though, that the difference with our 'regular get togethers' is the friendly, open nature of the whole event, a weekend characterised by tolerance, understanding and drunken debauchery where anyone can and will talk to anyone else about anything whatsoever and no one cares. I suppose this may have been straying from the point a little but to be perfectly honest Intersection was the only place where I would have expected (nay demanded my money back if disappointed) to meet the Bristol SF group - that's what SF conventions are all about.

Christina

It sounds like you have quite a high opinion of SF conventions and fans. Did Intersection live up to expectations in other respects? And is it true that you bought more t-shirts than books?

Pete

First let me make it clear that we most certainly enjoyed Intersection but not necessarily in the same sense that we enjoy an Eastercon for example. We had put our pessimist hats on for this Con and in no way were expecting it to be any good whatsoever. What we had seen of the organisation had not filled us with great expectations and to be honest it struck us as being too large, too badly organised, in a bad location (the SECC), with a reasonably uninspired choice of UK guest (not Anderson AGAIN, surely we could have put someone better than that on show to the world) and too expensive.

In the event, having dreaded it for weeks, we arrived. Almost immediately we spotted some friends, had a few beers and hunkered on down into Convention mode. And....., yes, alright, I admit it - we had a damn fine time. It all seemed to click in that je ne sais pas fashion. Can't explain it really although it actually seemed to run very smoothly (despite all expectations to the contrary), it probably wasn't too large after all (although very disjointed across 4 or 5 disparate locations), but lets face it the location was far from ideal (as expected), Anderson buggered off to London halfway through the con, and it DID cost us an absolute fortune. The dealers room wasn't as good as it should have been (and managed to prove that Star Trek IS taking over the Universe), I heard some horror stories about the Art Show, food and drink were exhorbitant, the Masquerade finally managed to put us off ever going to another one ever again (something we've been threatening for years) but the people made it work. The guests were brilliant, the attendees friendly, open and willing, the staff friendly (except some of the security b\*\*\*\*\*s), the tabloid press obliging and the company good.

And yes, it is true, we bought more T-shirts than can comfortably be worn and certainly more than we bought books.

Christina

Any more verdicts?

Amanda

The Con was very smoothly run and didn't seem to have any downside apart from - all together now - the acoustics in Hall 3 and lack of a Royal/Scotland/Lloyds/ Barclays cashpoint. Which is hardly the fault of the committee... Though they \*might\* have told people about the £10 a night Hall of Residence where Keith & I stayed.

Keith

In general I got to see less than I intended (largely due to on-the-day disorganisation). Having resolutely refused to volunteer for anything (in order to have more spare time) is not always successful in the way intended. Still, a generally enjoyable Worldcon, though not my favourite (Holland in '90 is out of the three that I've been to).

Richard

My only regret is not making it to the Eternicon cider party. And not discovering what the large white table in the gents at the Central was for.

Steve

I left on Monday morning; I'd had enough, and didn't want to spoil it. I made the right decision there, I think - fandom is not a way of life to me, and I wanted to get back to the real world. I don't regret going to Intersection. I do regret not getting my name taken off the Fan Room team list: in the event I just didn't turn up to report to Helen. Not very cosmic-minded of me, I know. I did quite a bit of duty on the Evolution desk - largely a waste of time, as no-one seemed to be interested in us, even when I tried to make eye-contact with passers-by. (At one stage I gave this up as a bad job and read a fanzine instead, but Simon said that people reading things on the convention desk made a bad impression. So much for the con's literary credentials.) But you can't make eye-contact with fans like that; fans have all got computing jobs in cities and spend their days avoiding beggars and flag-day collectors and loonies (and in the case of the American fans, armed loonies).

Let's not do it again. The Worldcon caused too many people to have to call in too many favours at once; as fandom relies on networks of trust and mutual help to get things done, this sustained and severe run on its resources almost drained the barrels dry. As I said, I ended up treating it like an Eastercon: a sort of double-length economy sized Eastercon. But the apparent 'economy' only came about because so much effort had been expended. It was good, but it wasn't worth it. Never again.

Christina

So cynical in one so young! Let's not do it again in a huge, acoustically-challenged exhibition centre, and definitely not till we've all got over the novelty of e-mail and can communicate like decent human beings.

Lilian

I wish I'd had as much sense as Steve and left on Monday or even Sunday morning before my biorhythms started to plummet. Friday night and Saturday night everything seemed to work perfectly, Dune, the champagne party, the disco, Have I Got Fandom - I was on a real high. Then Sunday I became bedevilled with the Eternicon party fiasco and hit a real downer. In general I think a con that long is too long for me (especially when you've been entertaining for a week beforehand) - perhaps I have a low pleasure threshold! More generally though I've been following the debate about whether we should

have another UK Worldcon again and trying to sort out what I think. Part of me feels that Intersection demonstrates that UK fandom can easily handle a Worldcon and that there's no reason why a successor con, less obsessed with keeping a tight hand on the pursestrings, more sophisticated in its use of email and with perhaps a more sympathetic venue should not be a good time for all. But another part feels that what I got out of the con - mainly a sense of achievement and meeting all my American friends again in one place - could not have been better achieved by, say, working hard at my job (instead of half-wrecking my career) and going to the odd Corflu! When I first became involved with Intersec, I imagined that the economies of scale of a Worldcon would mean that you could do things you'd never dreamed possible: invite the Hernandez brothers, Howard Rheingold and Marge Piercy as guests, run a virtual convention in real time on the World Wide Web, invite over Fringe acts from the Edinburgh Festival with an sf tinge to take part, get a decent band, not Hawkwind! . But in fact what you discover is that you have less budget, less control and more fuggheads to deal with than when running an average Eastercon (or, certainly, Mexican). I think my interim conclusion is: I would quite like someone to run another UK Worldcon, preferably with better accoustics - but - not me, chum!

Best night of Intersection		Worst day	
Friday	- Richard	Wednesday	- Christina
Friday	- Steve	Thursday	- Steve
Saturday	- Lilian	Sunday	- Lilian
Sunday	- Christina	Monday	- Richard
Monday	- Keith	June 3rd 1973	- Keith

### FANNISH MISTAKES # 37: THE MASQUERADE PARTY



*This fanzine has now made it on to the list of cool music promoters, Revolution Promotions, and so over the past month we have received the Wannadies CD and singles from Big White Stairs, Gouge, Mansen and 60 Ft Dolls. It sure beats trading for Australian crudzines, or even SFX (which Lilian and I succeeded in doing at Intersection!) The music has received plenty of plays from me over the past weeks as I sit at the computer pondering the meaning of deadlines, but I'm not sure I possess the vocabulary or perspective to do music reviews, so it's over to Simon to tell you what he thinks of these and his latest musical purchases. (By the way, the only review I disagree with substantively is 60 Ft Dolls. I don't think they're that bad - but what do I know?)*

## **THE NEW, THE COOL AND THE SARTORIALY CHALLENGED**

Record reviews by Simon Lake

### **JULIAN COPE - 20 Mothers (Echo - ECHD 5)**

Remember Julian Cope in the Teardrop Explodes cultivating that smouldering Scott Walkler look? Cool, eh. Remember when he posed naked under a turtle shell for the fried LP? Weird indeed. Well for his latest LP he's decided to sport an absolutely hideous stripey wizzard's hat. Doh! If you saw him walking down the street you'd want to hit him. Hell, I'm a pacifist and even I'd want to hit him.

Sartorial nightmares aside though, 20 Mothers is another slice of vintage Cope madness. It's 20 tracks (now there's a surprise!) spread over 71 minutes and covering every topic from Alzheimers to privatised industries via the usual dollopings of ley line/stone circle philosophising.

As ever the music is wonderful - none of this insular britpop stuff here. There's folk. There's punk. There's soul. There's songs that start as songs and end up as psychedelic jams. There's loads of analogue sounds too, the sort of stuff you usually only find on demented dance tunes.

The highlights are too numerous to mention. 'Queen/Mother' will stick in your head for days, 'The Lonely Guy' is magnificently sad while 'Road of Dreams' could almost have warped its way out of a Salvation Army hymn book. The LP closes with 'When I Walk Through The Land Of Fear' ambient cousin of the Teardrop's 'Tiny Children' and a haunting climax to a fine record.

20 songs, 71 minutes - a sprawling mess that defies categorisation. No sane man could get away with this, but then Cope is no sane man. In fact he's a genius - or, to be precise, a genius in a stupid hat!

### **WANNADIES - Be A Girl (Indolent - DIECD002)**

Hey, the Wannadies come from Sweden. And two of them are grave-diggers. And one of them is a semi-pro footballer. And they hate Roxette and Ace of Base.

Yes, with a pedigree like that you really want to love this band. And to an extent you can. Opening track 'You And Me' starts kinda slow and jazzy before the guitars kick in for some classic pop action. 'Love In June' and 'How Does It Feel?' offer some fine Teenage Fanclub-style harmonies. Elsewhere though there are a few too many generic indie numbers for my taste.

Things do pick up again towards the end, with the strings on 'Dreamy Wednesdays' adding an extra dimension to the basic sound while closing number 'kid' provides a welcome change of pace. It's easily the best track on the album, built around fragile vocals and a driving ambient drum riff.

Yes, the Wannadies have a great pedigree - now all they need is a few more great songs to back it up.



#### 60 FT DOLLS - Pig Valentine (Indolent - Dole018)

Picture the scene. It's Friday night (no, scrub that, it's gone midnight so it must be Saturday) and your humble reviewer has over-indulged in beer, wine and Indian food. There are several people in the room and the conversation is buzzing. Music plays in the background. On comes the 60ft Dolls single. It sounds like anonymous lo-fi 90's punk. Guitars buzz in all the expected places. The vocalist's strangulated rasp is a tad irritating.

The next day the reviewer feels suitably guilty at this snapshot judgement and resolves to listen again, this time sober and uninterrupted. Sadly the record doesn't sound any better. There are some potential song ideas here, but the songs sound raw for all the wrong reasons.

#### GOUGE - Get Off (Fluffy Bunny Records - Fluff 11)

Wonderful record (only their second single) that might do very well for this Cardiff four piece - as long as they don't get stuck with too many comparisons to that awful 'E' group (that's Elastica, kids). Title track 'Get Odd' has a killer chorus and 'The Scene' pumps along with boundless energy. Only the third track on the EP disappoints slightly and at 1 mins 47 at least it doesn't outstay its welcome. Okay, so you want a reference point for the sound of Gouge - try Sparks circa 'Propaganda' (for those of you too young or too sane to remember the early seventies, this is a good thing) or Blondie at their peak.

#### MANSEN - Take It Easy (Sci-Fi Hi Fi Recordings)

Mansen are apparently (their press release informs us) a five piece band from Chester and they play full on music with no compromise and no bullshit. They've also recently had to change their name from Manson to Mansen - er, wasn't that a bit of a compromise? Oh dear, this record also seems to have the same track on both sides despite information to the contrary on the label. Maybe having a conventional b-side would've been one compromise too many!

Luckily 'Take It Easy' is a fine song, so playing it twice is no great hardship. Juddering guitar riffs sprawl across the song with a frightening arrogance while the singer gives it some regulation northern bluster. For a debut single they certainly seem to know what they're doing. They don't lack confidence either, for the press release ends by promising Mansen will be huge. They might just be right.

And if you see that missing b-side floating around anywhere maybe you can write to Mansen and let them know.

#### BIG WHITE STAIRS - Help Me Out (Periscope - PeriCD4)

I suspect for this northern four piece the Oasis comparisons will be inevitable, given not only their sound but also the presence of brothers (in this case Steven and Andrew Young) on guitar and vocals. A more pertinent reference point might be the early seventies sound of Bowie or his proteges Mott The Hoople.

Still these are only reference points. What Big White Stairs have on their side is a vast amount of energy that takes these songs beyond mere retro territory. 'Help Me Out' starts calmly enough, but when Steven Young belts out the chorus '*Black is turning to grey*' the song really takes off. The other three songs on the CD are fine too, varied enough to suggest the step up to a full LP won't be a big one.

Big White Stairs are hardly offering anything new, but the current climate is favourable for this kind of thing. Will it be a hit? Definitely, maybe.

Second Hand Bargain of the month: KING OF THE SLUMS - Dandelions

KOTS remain one of the great lost Manchester bands - blossoming somewhere between Smiths-mania and the Roses/Mondays 'Madchester' era. Why they failed to get the appropriate music press recognition remains a mystery. Singer/lyricist Charley Keigher was mangling the English language in his own wonderfully idiosyncratic manner long before Shaun Ryder took that particular art into the charts. Meanwhile Sarah Curtis's manic violin playing gave the band a raw sound unmatched before or since.

'Dandelions' opens with the wonderful 'Schooley' - a timely warning for dirty old men who like to hang outside school gates (chorus 'You weren't born yesterday pal/ But she damn nearly was'). 'Unfit Mother' looks at child abuse from a different perspective, a taut violin riff adding a suitably claustrophobic atmosphere. A couple of tracks on side two tread water, but the brooding drum and bass intro to 'Psycho Motorbike Ride' and the extended feedback ending to 'Bear With Me' round this record off in style.

(King Of The Slums LPs include Dandelions, Blowzy Weirdos and the compilation Barborous English Fayre. Dandelion was bought at Replay in Bristol for the bargain price of £2-90)

~~~~~  
*And now we come to our regular spot where Tim Goodrick's sanity deteriorates further under the onslaught of mad neighbours and I try to defeat his word processor codes by sheer force of will to make it format like the rest of the fanzine (I normally fail!)*

HALFWAY UP THE STAIRS - THE MISS LEE LETTERS                      PART 5  
by Tim Goodrick

Here we are again, running a finger through the dust on my memories of a strange time in a flat in Clifton, Bristol. Everything you read here is the truth, at least as I perceived it. The letters are reproduced word for word. Miss Lee lived below me in a house divided into four flats and, for all I know, she may be living there yet, terrorising the people who bought the flat from me.

For anyone who has never seen one, a Valpona is a solid stick of fly killer, about nine inches long, held in a cardboard tube with holes cut in it so that the stick can evaporate slowly. You usually hang it up from a light or a door lintel.

*First Floor Flat*  
August 28th '86

*Dear Mr. Goodrick,*

*This is to verify that the builder said he was coming early this Saturday about 9.30 am. I expect that means probably any time after 9 am \_\_\_ If you wish I could 'phone you when he is here. You may think it alright to give this one a chance when he comes up at weekends or you might wish to try another \_\_\_ It is up to you. Anyway whichever builder you have, much better to let him see the rain coming through. I went out this morning & on my return I noticed that the VALPONA flykiller, which I keep over the bedroom door has been taken \_\_\_ I hope the person who took this is a god fearing person & will use it for the right purpose.*

*Yours sincerely    Miss Lee.*

Endless people had tried to fix our roof, which looked as though it had been formed by some complex geological upheaval. Sloping bits met other sloping bits in stranger places and with greater frequency than you bumping into The Fan Who Must Be Avoided at every Con you attend. None of them succeeded in eliminating the leaks or the damp bits round the chimney piece.

A second letter appeared the same day, trumpeting good news and killing my idea for a Christmas book ( 101 Things To Do With A Stolen Valpona ).

*First Floor Flat  
Thursday 28th August*

*Dear Mr. Goodrick*

*The Valpona is found I had changed the place! I am relieved!!*

*In great haste \_*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Miss Lee.*

If you read the last installment, you'll remember The Mystery of the Missing Magazines. It continues...

*First Floor  
August 30th 1986*

*Dear Mr. Goodrick*

*I am sure that the person who has taken my magazines and papers will return them. I am sure that he is a good person really. I have been keeping a couple of magazines on the Royal Wedding & engagement etc, under my mattress and had 2 there when speaking to you on the telephone \_ I afterwards signed the papers and returned them to under the mattress but they seem to have been taken.*

*I do not have a T.V. because it is so expensive to buy or hire & as you know I am hoping to buy another flat & so have to be careful \_ the prices have gone up considerably. I know that you would not do anything with the intension of upsetting \_ But how does this person get in. You have a good job and spend your time well so I am sure that you would not be up to doing Stupid Tricks. \_ My intelligence tells me that people who do wrong are working against themselves.*

*In great haste*

*From Miss Lee.*

*P.S. Sorry about the writing the ink is running out.*

If you think that accusing fingers are being waved in my direction, try the next letter - the veils are ripped off completely.

*First Floor Flat  
1st September '86*

*Dear Mr. Goodrick,*

*I would very much like to have the (my) two magazines back now please. I bought them for myself and paid for them. They were taken very soon or whilst I was talking to you on the telephone on Saturday afternoon. I expect the magazines were given to some female (both are*

*Womans magazines) in return for something \_\_ shopping she has done. It is dreadful to know that I can't put things down in my own flat without someone swooping in. If the pages are much turned over I don't mind, the receiver has had them for over 2 days and should not mind giving them back to the owner. I have to put away papers, magazines because if they fall on the floor, the cat uses them. Please do the right thing - get them returned to me. I would be obliged \_\_ Miss Lee*

I barely had time to begin picturing the female who would accept stolen magazines in return for "something", when the next letter arrived. Now anyone who knows me will testify to the fact that I am at the peak of my fitness and move with the sleek grace of a cat (ok, who said Garfield?), so the reference to my agility in this next letter really stung.

*2nd September*

*Dear Mr. Goodrick,*

*Late Saturday afternoon - on the telephone I mentioned that I marked everything including books and magazines. I said I put them under the mattress - which was true on this occasion - but I do cover late newspapers because if the cat gets on them she scratches and tears them. I particularly wished to keep this magazine as I had only just begun to read it. \_\_ After the telephone conversation I marked two magazines & replaced them under the mattress \_\_ but when I went to get them some 10 - 15 minutes later, they were not where I (put) left them \_\_ I think this is strange, and it makes me feel very uncomfortable to know that some person is able to get in \_\_ What would you do about it? One of the magazines is the same I bought before which was taken. This petty stealing should be stopped. The Home Chat [Chap? Char? For once Miss Lee's writing has completely defeated me] and the supplement to the Evening Post found their way back somehow. Do not think I accuse you \_\_ you have your work to think about and anyway I am sure that you could not be so agile as this thief. Anyway let's hope the receiver has a conscience and knows what to do. In haste \_\_*

*Yours sincerely*

*Miss Lee.*

Judging by the next letter, our mysteriuious thief's appetite was merely whetted by the magazines and he went in pursuit of a meatier read, or perhaps not. My non-existent lodger begins to haunt the letters again.

*Thursday*

*Dear Mr. Goodrick,*

*I put down the book I in reading "Why We Don't Need Meat" by Peter Cox. I went into the front room and when I returned my book was not where I put it \_\_ All my front door are closed.*

*This is most horrible \_ Do you think (some person must get in) It is the lodger that has been with you for such a long time I am sure that you would not do such a thing even if you could get in unnoticed*

*Yours sincerely*

*Miss Lee*

*This book is expensive \_\_ I really cannot afford to buy things like this for others.*

*It is dreadful to have to keep locking doors behind me all the time.*

I can't remember exactly when, but sometime late that summer I was awakened one night by what sounded like a tin tray being banged on my bedside table and a voice shouting in my ear, "DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?!!!!" I struggled to wake up, thinking perhaps I'd bought a talking alarm clock and somehow forgotten about it. BANG. CRASH. "DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?!!!!" I recognised the voice at last. It was Ron, the chap who owned the basement flat, who couldn't abide even the sound of someone tiptoeing around in the flat above him. And he wasn't shouting in my ear, he was in the back garden, two floors below my bedroom. And the banging and the crashing? Well it began to sound like a dustbin being thrown around (I learned later it was a barbecue set).

"DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?!!!!" I looked at my radio-alarm. Two fifteen. Thanks Ron, yes, I know what time it is and I wish I didn't. The noise went on for some time and eventually I heard a door open and a firm, but polite, voice of one of the occupants of the ground floor flat asking Ron to go to bed. Ron answered with some expletives and more hurling of the barbecue. I am a fairly light sleeper and whatever noise they had been making had failed to wake me, unlike Ron's thunderous performance. The voice then informed him that he had best leave the garden within ten seconds or he'd have his legs broken. Strangely enough, he suddenly became very quiet. I think it was as I dropped back into sleep that night that the first serious thoughts about selling the flat came to me. If I'd known then how long it would take to sell it I think I'd have joined Ron kicking the barbecue round the garden. But that's yet another story.

*Written on*

*First Floor Flat*

*Oct=19th=86*

*Dear Mr. Goodrick*

*I forgot to mention when speaking to you on the 'phone that a large piece of pink plastic has been removed from top of kitchen small cupboard where I have only recently placed it. Before that I had it as a curtain piece along the wall to protect wall from grease spluttering up when frying etc. I was in all day yesterday, so no person from outside my flat could enter. I consider this a most spiteful and childish thing to do, also dishonest. I took it away from wall to protect the enamel top of cupboard as the builder has to sometimes stand on it when seeing to the lead pipe which recently leaked \_\_ I suspect this same thief took an old rezine shopping bag from my flat recently\_\_ I am sure that you would be be upset if a stranger got into your flat without your consent. If you know who is playing these tricks \_\_ Please stop him.*

*In haste \_\_ From Miss Lee.*

That's all for now, but next time be prepared to have your sick-bag to hand as we examine the foot skin scraper and the ulcerated legs.

*I HAVE ITALICS AND I'M GOING TO USE THEM!*

*Yes, the moment you've been waiting for now for six issues (at least I have), a properly italicised letter column! All credit to Simon, who systematically worked through all the keys to find out where the italics lurk in WordPerfect (instead of doing something as self-evidently stupid as reading the manual like I did!)*

*Failing Ted White's promised loc on my mega-rant about American fanzines last time, we'll just have to kick off with what American response I've had so far, viz*

**Teddy Harvia, 701 Regency Dr., Hurst, TX 76054-2307, USA**

Thanks for the hand-delivered copy of Balloons Over Bristol. International postage can be prohibitive. I found your British perspective on big American fanzines shocking. Not all Americans, myself included, read the monsters cover-to-cover. Although I admit all the world's problems cannot be solved by 30-second commercials or sound bites, answers hidden in tortuous labyrinths of text do not appeal to me either. Many writer philosophers seem to go on forever because they either have no point or are trying to convince themselves of something with endless repetition.

*I don't know. I wasn't accusing American fanzine writers of pointless repetition, just of aspiring to large issues, apparently for the sake of it. Meanwhile, Sandra Bond has me sussed :*

**Sandra Bond, 15 Buckler Road, Oxford OX2 7TE**

Your piece on US fanzines reads well at first sight but when you get down to it, US fanzines have as much a range of size from tiny to huge as UK ones -- it's just that we tend to see the most of the ones that make the most noise, and people like Ted White are very good at that. Putting all of Andy Hooper's small issues together to make one large one seems like cheating to me, and even so you overlook small fanzines such as Vicki Rosenzweig's Quipu or Tracy Benton's Cazbah. You have to take the whole picture, not just the parts of it that suit your theory best.

Having said that I agree with almost everything you say about Ted White and his ability both to get het up about anything and also to write entertainingly about his gripe.

*Yes, I did realise I was being a bit specious in places - I just wanted a hook to draw the casual reader in. If it hadn't taken so long to review Blat! and Habbakuk, I might have had time to go on to Apparatchik and Quipu and round the picture out a bit.*

**#10) Balloons over Bristol #8 (& 6 & 7),** edited by Christina Lake, theoretically available from 12 Hatherly Road, Bishopston Bristol BS7 8QA. Some things here calculated to piss me off; bloodless excuses about how Christina likes doing fanzines but hates to mail them. No one ever has any sympathy for me when I say that kind of thing, so I don't either. Plus, she rags on a couple of my favorite fanzines, and her most compelling reason seems to be that they are so thick that they make her head hurt. However, she says all this with reasonable humor, includes a nice lettercol, and articles by local pals like Tim Goodrick, Steve Brewster and the suspiciously familiar-sounding Simon Lake. I look forward to seeing more from her, assuming she ever feels like mailing subsequent issues out.

Review Apparatchik 42 ed. Andy Hooper

Steve Jeffery, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA  
Where American fanzines are not huge, they come at alarming frequency. There's Apparatchik, of course. But close on comes Arnie Katz and the Las Vegrant's collective with a stream of titles, notably the multi edited Wild Heirs. Federal Excess extends to some 23 editors and frequency of

publication that outstrips the ability to LoC the next issue (even by e-mail) and requires the insertion of fractionally-numbered side issues in Wild Heirs 7.5 and 8.5. The 'More is More' ethos for some of these zines springs in part, I suspect, from several of the editors' involvement in apas. Publishing frequency might be fuelled by the schedules of the smaller apas, while on the other hand there is the granddaddy FAPA, whose current mailing is reported as a mind-boggingly huge page count. Maybe they're all addicted to block (and shelf)-buster epic fantasy, of the Tad Williams or Robert Jordan variety, or maybe they just love to write and see their stuff in print. I don't know half the people frequently namedropped in US fan-historical zines. (The fractional issues of Wild Heirs do reprint classic material from the likes of Walt Willis and Bob Shaw, and for which I am deeply grateful). But 80-100 pages gets a bit much. It takes several days to read something this size, and they become almost impossible to loc, without being extremely selective. Something the size of Attitude (60 pages) feels about right for the top whack, while 10-12 pages might be a bit on the thin side for other than a 'special' or a relatively frequent title (Ansible, at 2pp monthly, is rather a special case)

Of course, slap in the middle of this, at 24 pp, Balloons Over Bristol must be nigh on the Perfect Size.

*Yes, I think that was the size Moshe Feder mentioned at Intersection as being his ideal length - so it must be true! My problem with long fanzines is similar to my problem with short story collections - I start them, then never remember to finish, and probably miss that brilliant article at the end. Mostly, I do manage to get through Attitude (maybe Michael Abbott, being a fiction writer, manages to inject some narrative drive into it?) I also have no trouble reading TWP (the women's apa) start to end, and that must often be around 100 pages per issue, so perhaps it's just a matter, as you say, of knowing the people invovled. A personal zine can introduce you to one person's perspective, whether known or unknown, and hold your attention but it's a much harder trick with a genzine.*

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

I admire your circulation policy - ie, essentially not to have one - as long as a copy of each ish reaches me, especially if the nextish contains Steve Brewster's confessions on the efficacy of his professed meet-the-people approach to Intersection: with such crowds, my problem has always been finding people at cons (or do they hide when they see me?).

But I do wish you'd push the boat out just far enough to double your staple usage and give us a book-format zine instead of corner-clipped one. All other aspects of layout and production are well above average; this little economy seems picayune.

*Well, to be honest it bugs me too - but this is the way they come collated from Richard's post room, and being a last minute production (yes, always), there's never time to take out and reposition the staples (one issue I tried to add staples, but found I needed three, and didn't like the results much better than before). But good news for all staple lovers, a change of printer is imminent (the bad news being that we probably won't be able to afford any more issues! Well I guess I could always give up making phone calls to America instead...)*

**Ken continued**

Please let Tim Goodrick run riot over your pages : how can you deny us the story of the garage the size of a house that seemed to come into existence overnight, and of the rat masquerading as a hedgehog? Set it all in 8-pt condensed if you will, but Give Us The Facts.

I did too buy The Big Issue: crap, innit?

*Actually, last time I bought it, I thought it was quite good. And just the right length read for the bus journey back from Bath to Bristol if no-one's remembered to send me any fanzines!*

Like Steve Jeffery, I regard all charities as swindles - but what's this about the National Lottery? All this happened when I was overseas, but I'd imagined that the sole function of a Millennium Fund was to provide us all with say two weeks off work with free food and booze to mark the end of 1,000 years of slavery with one humongous Party. The way the profits are going, they should be able to make that six months off work, now - comments, anyone?

Your Iranian lady was in Covent Garden in 1992, and making a damn good thing of it too. One is tempted to emulate Private Eye's YOBS comic strip, where they shake down the Big Issue vendor and pop off for a few bevvies - like Pat Silver's idea of pinching the bum-fondler, I suppose.

### **Sandra again**

I hadn't heard of the 'selfish little bitch' incident, and frankly I don't know what I can say, or what I'd have done in your position either. The most horrifying thing of all, in my eyes, is the studied ignorance of the fellow-passengers on the bus. There's something about being in a public place which makes you want to ignore anything out of the ordinary going on round you, as I found to my dismay when I was beaten up outside the Central Hotel in Glasgow during Worldcon. Frankly I believe that selfish little bitches have every right to be who they are, and for that that matter, as someone with next to no spare cash, I can understand anyone not giving to charity -- if that makes them, and me, selfish little bitches too that's just tough luck. The last person to try and make me feel guilty over this was Owen Whiteoak, which may explain why he didn't have much sympathy from me at the time of the Nova Wars a few years back.

*Owen Whiteoak accused you of being a selfish little bitch? The mind boggles! What had you done? By the way, I'm sorry to hear about you being beaten up - it being just outside one of the convention hotels makes it seem even worse. I trust you have recovered.*

Hurrah, someone else who makes a virtue out of necessity and is proud of not being able to decipher those wretched 3D pictures which get everywhere these days. Last year they even had them on the side of Pepsi cans, and I was so infuriated that I started buying Coke instead until they were removed once more.

Tim Goodrick's articles on Miss Lee are very entertaining, though I can't help feeling a twinge of sympathy and guilty non-PC-ness for the poor old woman. What could have made her such an odd case? We'll never know.

*Any bets on Alzheimers?*

### **Steve encore**

I'm not sure how much more of the Miss Lee saga I can take. The surreal daftness of this begins to repeat after a while (substitute 'dust cap' or 'yellow rubber gloves' for 'colander' or 'dressing gown'). Miss Lee is no prose stylist, But then neither was Mr Pooter, and *Diary of a Nobody* was a smash hit, so maybe Tim ought to resurrect the idea



of the book. (He might have to check on letters as copyright or other legal tangles first; And what of reproducing these here in BoB?)

*We're still looking forward to our first letter from Miss Lee's solicitor. "Only the wicked see the need to steal letters from helpless old ladies. If Mr Goodrick's lodger would put them back under Miss Lee's pillow, she will say no more about it."*

I think it was in BoB 5 that Lilian raised the awful suspicion that those fan artist illos in Lagoon 6 were actually done by D West. Suspicion turn to horrible (and admittedly hilarious) certainty where the Game Is Up in Lagoon 7. Fakes, every one. Brilliantly executed, I have to admit. Only two or three looked iffy to me, and a couple more I didn't know well enough to have an opinion on. 'Fooled you all', chortles West through a haze of cigarette ash. 'Showed you too, didn't I?' Parody by example. "Show, don't tell" as they keep emphasising in writer's workshops. Quite masterly.

*It's true that Lilian was attributed with the line that D West must have done them all in one of the dream sequences of my Novacon report. But I have to confess that Simon Ounsley let on to me at the convention that D had faked them all, so we can't claim much credit.*

**Dave Harwood, 20 Maldon Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5AZ**

I don't think I'll object if Miss Lee continues for a while yet, and indeed I'd possibly prefer more interjections from Tim. F'rinstance, a description of Miss Lee herself wouldn't go amiss; I find it hard to visualise this shadowy, mysterious woman. (I once had an armed robber as an upstairs neighbour, y'know - not that I was aware of it until a dozen policemen rushed in and kicked down his door. I don't know why they did that; I told them he wasn't in the house.)

It's quite apt, I suppose, that the biggest article in BoB is on big American fanzines. Not something I can comment on, however - such things being unknown to me (tho' I remember big American comiczines, from the late '60s/ early '70s) - except to note that, like you, I am by preference a linear reader and like best the fanzines I can read straight through from cover to cover.

Conventions and, especially, Intersection are of limited interest to someone like me who has all the social skills of a fossilised trilobite, but nonetheless I hope Steve had a good time. Doubtless he'll tell us how it turned out next time. I did see you, Christina, laughing on Channel 4; was this a good sign?

*Well, yes, I enjoyed myself. At that point Lilian, Lynn Steffan and I were clustered round Nevenah Smith while she went through her address book giving the run-down on all her lovers. I looked up and saw the camera and was rather looking forward to hearing the soundtrack broadcast!*

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, I'd never heard of Sarah records, but I don't mind being educated. Simon's categorisation of their output as bedsit angst recalled to mind 'Pillows and Prayers', which I'd listened to a few weeks back (for the first time in many moons). It was strange how some of it sounded very dated indeed, while other bits remained quite fresh and endearing. Must admit I've always had a bit of a soft spot for gentle acoustic pop (Everything But the Girl, Ruby Blue et al), tho' I actually have relatively little of

such music in my record collection. But then, generally, I tend to prefer more instrumentally-oriented music; indeed, the trend away from guitar/sax/synthesiser/whatever solos is part of the reason I find much modern 'indie' music so bland.

During the '80s, especially, I bought quite a few sale-price compilation albums (as well as 7" and 12" singles) in the hope of finding groups/artistes worth further investigation, and to some extent this was productive, tho' not as much as I might have hoped. Therefore, as Simon notes with Sarah records, it was often useful when record labels themselves offered some kind of 'product image'; not necessarily a style of music, but rather an 'attitude' with which one could empathise (like 4AD or Cooking Vinyl) (in the USA Ralph Records or Shimmy Disc; labels like SST or Alternative Tentacles were perhaps too broad, for my tastes, tho' they operated from a similar philosophy). Actually, the only label I ever felt like being a completist with was when Vertigo started, back in '69 or '70; the feeling didn't last long, however, since Black Sabbath were one of their early signings.

Nowadays, of course, I've pretty much given up buying recors, partly because I never go round to buying a CD player, but also because most current pop/rock really doesn't interest me much. I mean, I know I've heard stuff by Oasis, Pulp, Blur etc. etc., but I remember absolutely none of it.

By the by, noting comments (in the lettercol) on 'sf reading guides', Virgin Records used to do this with albums - I dunno if they still do. A nice idea, in theory, tho's some of their suggestions seemed rather dubious ("If you like Faust, why not try Henry Cow.." is one I remember; I quite liked both, but they had little in common musically). I'm sure it would be easier now : "If you like Oasis, why not try any other Indie group around", sort of thing. But really I suspect that people's music tastes tend to be even more idiosyncratic than their reading tastes.

#### **Ken concluded**

I know what Bridget Hardcastle means, but I can't help feeling that those who like Terry Pratchett may HATE her alternatives - I base this conclusion on a long chat with Terry and a group of fen at a small con a few years back when Robert Rankin was another GoH. And I can't really-really accept her claim that she's "not even that well-read," when she can list 50 SF authors offering "dodgy sex." I could probably scrape up a dozen...

Re Portishead/etc: isn't it often the case that "boring" recordings are the most "addictive"? They get in the bloodstream by osmosis.

#### **Colin Greenland, 2a Ortygia House, 6 Lower Road, Harrow HA2 ODA**

Thank you for Probably number 7 (ish). You've made an old man feel quite hip. Naturally I adore Elastica, & bought *Second Light* without knowing Dreadzone were even fashionable (preen). Portishead I like so much it makes me a bit anxious that they're so generally accepted. Usually when my Weirdo Specialized Tastes go global (Talking Heads, Eurythmics, Simple Minds), it's *bad* news thereafter. REM are still okay, I suppose. Britpop is good news, obviously, tho the rest of it - Suede & Oasis in particular, Blur & Pulp too - seems merely satisfactory. It seems to me the absolute equivalent of the Kinks or the Small Faces rather than the Beatles (who were actually terribly good, it's hard to remember sometimes, isn't it?) or David Bowie: basic, indigenous, intelligent,

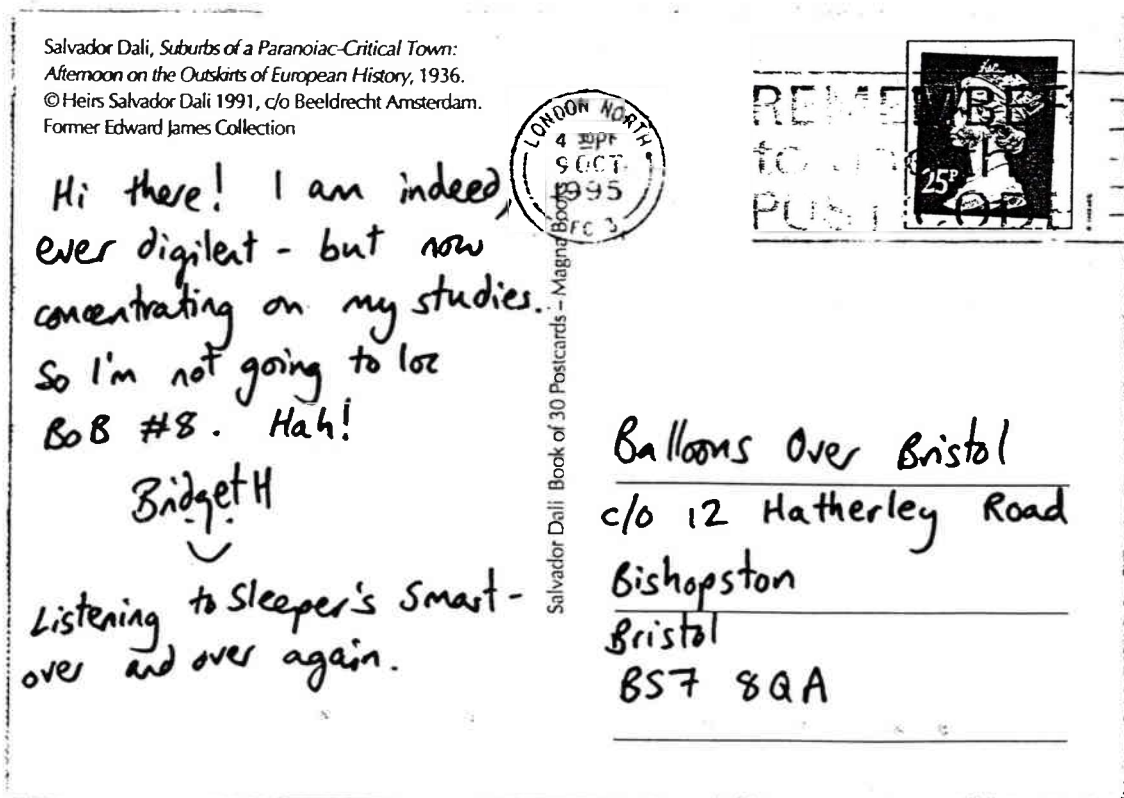
indispensable wholesome bread & butter pop - the very least we should require of our petulant & overweening youth, rather than something to get obsessed about. Better than all that godawful daffy Manc crap that was our last effort at a New Thing, that's for sure. Of course, I'm listening in my suburban kitchen instead of on a sweaty dancefloor, so maybe I miss the point.

### Sandra once more

Alison Freebairn managed to annoy me by being rude about three of the four best new bands around at the moment (she probably doesn't like Supergrass either, but at least she doesn't say so in your letter column). Yes, Blur are extremely derivative; but since the Small Faces haven't done anything for years, and with Steve Marriot dead it's no surprise, Blur, being the next best thing, will have to do. I dunno whose idea it was that Oasis are Beatles clones, while on this subject; I have never seen the resemblance.

Got to go, the Bill is on TV. It's wonderful not living with Joy Hibbert any more -- you can watch The Bill without being accused of nurturing fascist tendencies.

*And now we see the perils of taking our best letter writer for granted. But, you can't get out of being quoted that easily, Bridget!*



### Steve pour finir

Everybody seems to be mentioning favourite bands, so : Current faves of Kidlington are: Belly, Elastica, Echobelly, Verruca Salt, Skleeper, P J Harvey (Goddess of Glastonbury in eye-wrenching pink lycra), the late lamented Curve. For those folkier moments, Sheila Chandra, June Tabor, Kathryn Tickell, Sandy Denny. And when you're really down, Richard Thompson or John Martyn (circa *Grace and Danger*) can just about finish you off.

Thank you, but I'd rather it was the fanzine finished off than me! Let's end with a plug for Timebytes, a two volume fanthology of fannish life in the UK between 1987 and 1995 (available from me, that is Christina Lake, at the same address as this fanzine, for £6 (or £10/£15 overseas) And on the subject of TimeBytes, one last word from Dave Harwood, our cover artist for volume 2.

#### Dave

I've always felt a bit guilty for being such a poor respondee to most sf zines I've been sent, especially yours (since you've sent me more than anyone else), but as you know I find it difficult to acutally find anything to say about them. As a result Timebytes II was a bloody frustrating zine, since it's about the first sf zine I've received since the days of the Cidereal Times (circa 1978/9) where I've found stacks of stuff to provoke comment. And there'd be no point, since there'd be nowhere to print them. Besides, I imagine you're assuming readers would be familiar with much of this stuff anyway, and second-time-around comment would be superfluous. Oh well, I guess it at least points out to me that there are other sf zines out there that I might enjoy, tho' I probably wouldn't enjoy them as much as Timebytes itself. Anyway, take a bow, it was an excellent compilation and, for someone like me, a very absorbing read.

*If anyone else feels the urge to loc Timebytes, then please send your comments to me or Lillian, and who knows, maybe we'll produce some kind of letter supplement!*

Apparatchik 42 / Andy Hooper

**FANZINE COUNTDOWN, August 19th to September 14th**

**#1) TimeBytes, part 1 & 2**, edited by Lillian Edwards & Christina Lake, no address offered, no price information provided, but Lillian and Christina's addresses appear appended to other fanzines listed below: I have to admit that I did not expect very much from these fanthologies. I picked one up right after reading Christina's review of Habakkuk and Blatf In Balloons over Bristol #8 (see below), and observing her prejudice against large and past-obsessed fannish projects, I wondered what these could possibly entail. I was therefore very pleasantly surprised to find that they are in fact the finest Fanthologies that I have read in a 17-year fannish career. L & C have sifted through literally dozens of fanzines and other primary sources to create a superb picture of British fandom between Conspiracy and Intersection, a document that may be the richest and most complete piece of fanhistorical editing ever done. Each volume is full of artwork that accompanied the original publications, the excerpts are arranged to create an actual narrative flow, and the editors' gentle guding commentary gives a sense of personality without bludgeoning one over the head with theory. The fact that the ultimate effect is rather depressing cannot be laid at the editors' doors; in many ways, the past eight years have been a little depressing for British fandom, an ebbing of all activity save for pointless e-mail drivel between Intersection Committee members. The fact that L & C could produce such an entertaining and attractive document in regard to the period is quite an achievement. Plus, the fact that they asked permission to use the material included is a novel touch that the producers of the past two American Fanthologies seem to have forgotten. I paid £4.00 apiece for these at the fan table in Glasgow; damned if I know how you are supposed to get one, but you ought to try.

BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL 9

*Contents*

|                         |                   |    |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----|
| Editorial               | - Christina Lake  | 1  |
| Contraflow              | - Everybody       | 3  |
| Record reviews          | - Simon Lake      | 15 |
| Miss Lee letters        | - Tim Goodrick    | 17 |
| Letter column           | - Christina et al | 21 |
| Art p. 14 Steve Jeffrey |                   |    |

*This fanzine is available for cool CDs, cheap transatlantic phone deals, used Nova awards, recycled plastic bottles and all the usual shows of interest.*

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October 1995