



...SHOP-TALK AND SCENE-SETTING NATTER...ALSO EXCUSES.....IN.....

INTRO

INTRO...just me and my cardboard guitar.

INTRO

After a morning spent staring vacantly at the drawing of a dough nut jammer taped to my drawing board a lunch hour sitting on the steps of St.Paul's Cathedral, reading the latest news from the South Atlantic and watching the office-girls in their newly- acquired mini-skirts as they walk on by, seems time much better spent. It's a glorious day - summer having finally arrived - with only the thought of an afternoon slaving over a hot drawing board to mar it in any way. The only thing worse than having a job is not having a job. Sighing, I turn and watch as a group of American tourists, all wearing expensive cameras and silly hats, climb the steps in order to snap pictures of the place where Chas n'Di got hitched ten months earlier. Oddly, I find myself wondering how I will begin the INTRO for this issue.....

This issue's cover was drawn by Harry Bell over rough pencils by myself, and Electrostencilled by John Harvey. As it happens Harry is staying at my place for a few days and as I type he is heading uptown on the Underground, bound for the Royal Academy and it's Summer Exhibition. Also, as I type, Greg and Linda Pickersgill are in a jet high over the Atlantic bound for New Orleans, and then to Atlanta for a convention in early June. In one way at least, British fandom is on the move.

Among other things this issue contains another report from EPSILON's fan on the spot, Leroy Kettle, on ethical issues of grave importance to the future of fandom and of the free world.

This is EPSILON 11 and it is being produced in time for the June One Tun and also in time for Harry Bell to help me with the collating (though he doesn't know it yet). It comes to you from:

9A Greenleaf Rd.
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United Kingdom.

...ROB HANSEN 28/5/82.

For the benefit of the fannish newcomer I herewith list the stages of fandom:

- You're a NEO -when you're more impressed that Bob Shaw writes SF novels than that he writes for fanzines.
- a TRUFAN -when you're more impressed that Bob Shaw writes for fanzines than that he writes SF novels.
- a BNF -when Bob Shaw is impressed that you write for fanzines.

There you are....fanspeak isn' as difficult to grasp as you thought it was.

THE PROBLEMS OF PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE CONSIDERED.....IN....

NOTIONS

NOTIONS....in which the editor has grandiose ideas.

NOTIONS

As usual a lot of British fans decided to pub their ish for the Eastercon and I came away from the convention with eleven fanzines, which is quite a respectable number. However, between Christmas and Easter (a period which is a large chunk of the year, after all) there were very few zines published in the UK and only the steady stream of fanzines from across the Atlantic kept my interest alive. Now I understand the undoubted attractions of publishing an issue for a large convention, the main one being the opportunity to cut expensive postage bills afforded by an event where a good 80% of your domestic mailing list could be reasonably expected to appear, but the concentration of so much of the current low level of fanzine output in the UK around the major conventions could prove very detrimental to British fandom. The main problem is that this concentration creates high-spots interspersed with long periods of, at best, sporadic output which damages the continuity of things and can lead, as it certainly did with me, to a waning of interest. As Gary Farber recently put it:

"(Fandom) isn't a static thing. It's an ongoing act of constant creation. If people aren't continually doing it, in the present, all past accomplishments become merely a bunch of things that happened in the past."

Some of you, no doubt, are by now ready to direct an accusing finger at me and to point out that EPSILON wasn't published between Christmas and Easter and that the last issue was published for the Eastercon. I would have to admit that this is so. However, EPSILON is published to a roughly quarterly schedule, so with an issue appearing shortly before Christmas Easter suited the publication of the following issue rather nicely. What then of those who publish only once or twice a year? A publication rate of less than, say, three times a year is a less than healthy one in any case if you want to maintain any interest in your fanzine, and with such a schedule it would be more sensible to publish between conventions. As many observers have pointed out, the response rate to fanzines distributed at a convention is significantly lower than that to fanzines sent through the post and since response is one of the main reasons for publishing a fanzine in the first place, though hardly the only one, I would have thought those with such schedules would have wanted their creations to get as much attention as possible and would not allow them to get swallowed up by the flood of fanzines at a convention. What all this boils down to is a plea for more fanzines and for the more frequent appearance of those we do have to strengthen what Farber called "...an ongoing act of constant creation", an act of creation that is, after all, the fandom that all or us have some interest in continuing and in seeing a lot healthier. In fandom quantity is as important as quality.

In that same piece Farber also points out that:

"If we continue to create the shared context, the community of fandom, we thrive. If we stop - or create enough self-destructive elements - as a community we die."

In this context most of the unnecessary arguments about the perceived 'elitism' of the pre-SEACON fans in this country constituted a 'destructive element' and I'm glad to see that they appear to be abating and that there are signs of a greater degree of integration between old and new emerging. With this in mind I was interested to read John D.Owen's letter in the latest issue of Chuck Connor's IDOMO where he referred to my "attempts to 'defend' the Old Guard" which is not what I actually thought I'd been up to these past few issues. I saw what I was doing more in terms of correcting certain misconceptions and pointing out that there was often more to much of what was going on in fandom than there appeared to be. John also refers to what he sees as "...the classic reaction of offering (Joseph Nicholas) up as a sacrifice...a beautiful piece of chicanery", which again is not quite the way I view what I wrote in the last installment of this column (though to be fair LoCs on issue 9 also referred, in bits edited out because I considered them silly, to things such as "...a well deserved knife - with a 'K', naturally - placed between the shoulder blades of Joe Nicholas", and to it being "...nice to see Nicholas get his"). Rather than that piece in any way being the offering up of Nicholas as a sacrifice it was more the result of my being sparked off by his article in NABU 11 and would not have been written if that piece hadn't appeared. There is also no personal animosity between us and I'm sure he still has much to contribute to fandom. What this comes down to, once again, is whether you view criticism in terms of a personal attack on the individual being called to task, or as an attempt to maintain and improve standards and thus a vital part of the fannish process.

While the flow of fanzines from British faneds slowed to a trickle in the months leading up to Easter there was, as mentioned earlier, a steady stream of zines from the US and among these was Ted White and Dan Steffan's PONG, a fanzine whose frequent publication schedule (every three weeks) makes it the one I most look forward to seeing turn up on my doormat these days. The fact that PONG is American makes such anticipation quite remarkable because once it would have been difficult to imagine feeling that way about any fanzine from the US.

Back in the seventies, in that time that both rosy memories and a pile of classic fanzines insist was a 'golden age' for British fandom, I found all but a very few of the fanzines that came my way from the USA to be fairly dull, the most notable exception being Terry Hughes' MOTA. Hence my comment in the opening pages of EPSILON 7 that it was the opinion "...of British fandom that except for MOTA, and one or two others, American zines were largely bland and boring", a state of affairs that may be explained by Martin Moose Wooster's observation in PONG 31 that "...the seventies, in North American fandom, have been a decade of uncritical acceptance...", though his claim that this was "...because the fanzines of the seventies chose to abandon talking about science fiction..." is not one I would agree with, mainly for reasons stated in this column, vis a vis the 'fannish-v-sercon' argument, in issue eight. Thus the US fanzines of the seventies, or rather those that made it over here, established an image in my mind that remained largely unchanged until I began receiving PONG in mid-1981.

British fandom in the seventies was sufficiently interesting and absorbing that, with the exception of occasionally attempting to extend the

North American side of my mailing list by sending more copies over (seeds sown on barren ground as it turned out), I gave little thought to the state of US fanzines and to what was going on in American fandom. While British zines generally seemed better I assumed, whenever I did give the matter some thought, that even leaving aside such questions as relative quality I would naturally prefer the British product anyway, and not merely because I was more familiar with the people mentioned and the issues being discussed. Since much of the culture of a society is embodied in its language the fact that we all speak English, coupled with the similarity of our political and legal systems means that we share a common cultural base. Even so, our cultures are not the same and the different cultural assumptions that underlie what we write are bound to make it somewhat less accessible to those across the water than to those on our own side of the Atlantic. While the nature of the fannish sub-culture lessens the effects of this to some degree, differences still remain - and it's not just a question of cultural nuance but also one of approach. There have been occasional attempts to define the difference between US and UK fandom and the fanzines they produce, one of the most recent being by Joseph Nicholas. In NABU 10 he claimed that many American fanzines were "...totally devoid of the slightest sign of intellectualisation, wit, or subtlety", and, on wondering why, decided that:

"...the most plausible answer has to do with the nature of American culture at large and in particular with the loony fringe rubbish of EST and encounter groups and other so-called consciousness-raising 'self-realisation' therapies that have become so prominent in the past decade; "therapies" which have as their ultimate goal the forcing of the participants to bring into the open every last facet of their personalities...with the practical result that they end up with no real depth of personality at all: surface appearances not only count for everything, they are everything, concealing nothing, because, with everything moved out into the open, there's nothing left to conceal."

While the above is - as you would expect - a bit over the top, Nicholas hit upon something that is useful when considering the cultural differences that inform our two fandoms - though he confuses cause and effect. This is perhaps best illustrated by quoting the American novelist Paul Theroux, who has lived in London more than ten years now and who said, in the SUNDAY TIMES of 20th December 1981, that:

"The British, as a race, are habitually secretive: that casts a powerful spell on the American novelist who is used to ear-bending candour."

This probably also explains the failure of CB radio to take off in this country on the scale anticipated. When CB was finally legalised over here last year many electrical equipment dealers ordered large numbers of CB units in anticipation, based on the American experience, of making a killing. The flood of buyers they were expecting never materialised and many of them got their fingers burned. As one dealer put it: "It appears the British don't like the idea of talking to total strangers." This also no doubt explains why Mike Glycer commented, in Marty Cantor's HOLIER THAN THOU, "...on what

fanzines the Americans excel at producing with which the British fail to compete" which is, apparently, "...emotional breakthrough fanzines such as PHOSPHENE or AWRY" which contain "...explorations of problem-handling and emotions resulting in fascinating human insights...writing which contributes to self understanding". It also no doubt explains my reaction in giving a silent prayer of thanks.

In PONG recently there has been some discussion as to the relative merits of BY BRITISH and MOOD 70, the two anthologies of British fanwriting of the seventies published for SEACON - the former edited by Ian Maule and Joseph Nicholas, the latter by Kevin Smith. The timing of these publications was rather interesting because with the Worldcon being held in Britain for the first time in a decade-and-a-half here was an occasion on which there were a large number of new and foreign fans gathered together who were unfamiliar with what had occurred in British fandom in the preceding decade and thus a whole new audience for the material that had been produced in that period. The purpose of the publications was not the aggrandisement of the editors, but more a way of saying: "Look! Here we are and this is what we've produced that we are proud of", a fairly universal urge for any culture. Fandom is, after all, an intricate sub-culture having its own values and traditions, with seventies British fandom being in many ways a self-contained sub-culture within this larger structure, and the pride of any culture is its art - which in fandom's case is what is published in fanzines. Whether or not the editors of the anthologies realised it at the time (and subconsciously they probably did) the structure that was seventies British fandom, the mood and atmosphere that created and sustained it, was starting to collapse and by publishing them where and when they did they disseminated what they considered the essence of that fandom in as wide a manner as possible and so ensured the survival of much good writing and also the spreading of the message, such as it was.

While both volumes are flawed (by the omission of Greg Pickersgill from BY BRITISH, the omission of D. West from both, and like that) I am forced, on weighing their relative merits, to come down in favour of BY BRITISH for its inclusion of Rob Holdstock's EIGHT DAYS A WEEK (possibly the best single piece of the period) and for Joseph Nicholas' overview of British fandom in the seventies. To date this article remains the only account to attempt to encompass the full period and as such it is an important work because it gives those who have come along since some idea of what has gone before, and the articles reprinted show new fans what has been achieved in the past and provide them with something to measure their own efforts against. As Greg Pickersgill put it in STOP BREAKING DOWN 7:

"...everyone comes to fandom and fanzines as if they've just invented it for themselves, which is not only alarmingly solipsist but also as far as I'm concerned is totally fucking stupid. It would never occur to me to try and do something without checking on how it had been done before, and moreover, not doing it at all if I felt I couldn't at least equal the people who'd come before me."

Of course while such tomes are probably the best place to go "...checking on how it had been done before..." they can only serve this purpose if they

remain both in-print and generally available. As far as I'm aware copies of both can still be obtained from their respective editors, but whether this was a planned surplus or not I wouldn't know. In contrast, Richard Bergeron has said that when he published WARHOON 28, the 600-plus page reprinting of the best writings of Walt Willis, he deliberately had enough copies printed so as to ensure they would be available for some years to come, and for that he is to be applauded, but such extra printing costs money and while its desirable to keep such works in print it's easy to see why they so often have limited runs and are gone in short order. If one accepts the desirability...no, the necessity...of producing such works and ensuring their continued availability, is there a better way of doing so than relying on individual fans such as those mentioned? There may well be.

Back in the late 1950s a lot of the fans of the day were worried about the lack of channels of recruitment to British fandom and about falling numbers, so in October 1958 a number of them got together at the George Hotel in Kettering and established the British Science Fiction Association, a national organisation that published a sercon official organ full of reviews of SF, and in which was embedded a hook consisting of reviews of, and reprints from, fanzines that it was hoped would lead many BSFA members into fandom proper. The patchy history of this shambling golem and its periodic habit of, like Frankenstein's monster, turning on its creators and their descendants has been commented on before, but at least in this one instance fandom made a strong and concerted effort to safeguard its future. What then of one to safeguard its past?

The proposition, simply stated, is the establishing of a fannish foundation whose initial, and primary, purpose would be the publishing of a regular organ devoted in part to reprints and in part to overviews, re-appraisals, and histories of specific periods, matters, and fans. It would be a magazine published primarily for the members of the foundation but also made available to others and printed in sufficient numbers to ensure its continuing availability. In time, if it proved successful, the foundation could tackle larger projects it thought worthy and/or necessary such as, for instance, a new and updated edition of the Speer/Eney FANCYCLOPEDIA.

Part of the problem with the way we approach the reprinting of fanhistoric material and discussion of fanhistory is that it's very much a hit-and-miss affair with random reprintings (not that the reprinting of classic material should be discouraged) and piecemeal re-appraisals that in no way constitute a unified approach or even enable you to visualise the basic outlines of the overall picture. Also the specific peculiarities of outlook of the person writing the re-appraisals, or the tastes of the person selecting the material to be reprinted, can give a very skewed picture of events. Malcolm Edwards has already pointed out that the section of the Nicholas article in BY BRITISH dealing with the early seventies contains a number of minor errors having a culmulative effect that warps the picture somewhat, while Richard Bergeron's reprinting of such a large body of work by Walt Willis in WARHOON 28 skews the picture in another way. I'm very grateful that Bergeron published this volume since it gave me access to a large quantity of high quality fanwriting that I might never have otherwise encountered, but

devoting so much space to one writer from what appears to have been a very fertile period of activity does tend to blot out the others. Not having access to the works of the other major fanwriters of the period one loses much of the context of Willis' writing and one could almost be forgiven for believing that in the fifties Willis was fandom, with one or two other people on the fringes. None of this is Bergeron's fault but it does emphasise the need for a more planned approach to reprinting, to the writing of historical analyses, and to fanhistory in general.

To avoid such pitfalls any magazine such as the one envisioned would need to have a fairly well-defined set of objectives, an editorial 'charter' if you like, worked out by its founders beforehand and also a well-planned approach that allowed the editor (possibly a rotating position) to put something of an individual stamp on those issues he edited without allowing his specific prejudices and priorities to affect the magazine too much. In fact by ensuring, wherever possible, that opposing views of a particular affair or period were represented we could go some way to resolving the problem of received wisdom. An example of what I mean by this is the generally held view that fanzines produced by British fandom in the sixties (or those produced by American fandom in the seventies) were pretty awful and that British fandom itself was, as Kevin Smith put it in his introduction to MOOD 70, "...friendly and nice and nine-tenths dead...in dire need of a shake-up..." While the few sixties zines I've seen tend to confirm this picture it would be interesting to hear a dissenting voice and also to gain some insight into a period that is one (among many) that I have little knowledge of. The more information that is made generally available the more chance there will be for people to make their own judgements and the less will be the need to rely on 'received wisdom'.

The logistic and financial aspects of setting up and running such an organisation are not ones I have the knowledge or experience to speculate on, but it seems to me that it would ideally be run from the US, given the greater interest shown in fanhistory over there particularly that shown by writers of proven ability, but should be international rather than national in outlook. Financing would obviously be through memberships after the fashion of the BSFA and N3F but what it would work out at, and how frequently it would be possible to publish the official organ, I couldn't say.

All of this is only an idea, but such an approach to the whole question of fanhistory may well be necessary if we ever intend to seriously attempt to make information about the past, and its finest works, more generally available to those in the present and the future who want access to them. By doing so, by making the details of the past and its fruits easily accessible, we might finally halt the continual re-invention of the wheel and at last eliminate the period of repeating the errors of the past that each new influx of fans pass through when they first put out their own fanzines. While this may well be wishful thinking such an outcome could only be to the benefit of us all.

MAN OF STEAL

MAN OF STEAL.....an article of high moral tone from....

MAN OF STEAL

LEROY KETTLE.

There are a number of fundamental fannish freedoms:

the freedom to pub one's ish...

(the corresponding negative freedom is more popular)

the freedom to do something real soon now...

(very popular)

the freedom to gafiate...

(not one I'd recommend)

the freedom to drink to excess and beyond...

(strongly recommended)

the freedom to throw up in the privacy of one's own hotel bedroom...

(unfortunately the last seven words are often forgotten)

the freedom to try unsuccessfully to sleep around at cons...

(some people actually abuse this freedom!)

the freedom to spell appallingly badly, and other words...

(I could name names)

the freedom to make dwarf jokes about Ian Williams...

(I could name gnomes)

the freedom to run a convention...

(increasingly popular)

the freedom to be rude about people who run conventions...

(increasingly popular)

the freedom to run a convention and restrict it to people who won't be rude about the people running it...

(eg. FAANCON - not increasingly popular)

the freedom to laugh immoderately at Mike Glicksohn's kaftan...

(HO HO HO)

the freedom to smack John Brosnan in the teeth; and other such freedoms...

(very popular with John's dentist and most other people)

There are also the equally famous and basic fannish rights:

the right to write (pretty basic)

the right to write right (also basic but not used so frequently)

the right to write wrong (This is not a right. This is a fake right and was only put in to fool Joe Nicholas into thinking he hadn't been making a mistake all these years)

the right to right wrongs (this can be carried too far as demonstrated
in the sort of fanzine reviews Ian Maule
doesn't like to get but likes to publish)

the right to rites (as practised by D. West and his coven)

and (among others) the right to write one's own anecdotes.

Now I think the last-right is important. Having the critical ability of a pebble (and a pretty indiscriminating one at that) I tend to write one of two things: anecdotes and lies. Mainly both. However, one thing about anecdotes is that they should have some large element of truth in them and they should really be events that happened to the teller or in his presence. Unless you want to make it quite clear that you're retelling one of Peter Roberts' favourite anecdotes (the sort he used to write before he exercised the freedom to gafiate), you should keep off his territory.

The other day (that's got you hooked straight away) I was sitting with Bob Shaw and Malcolm Edwards (no, don't stop reading) and we were talking about health and food.

"Don't you tell me about health and food", I said to Bob aggressively, managing to pour at least some of the whisky into my glass, "let me tell you about health and food. I read recently that what you need is a big spoonful of brewer's yeast every day. Can't remember where I read it, but apparently it makes you feel great."

"Really", said Bob, trying to prise my fingers free of the bottle while Malcolm sat there, his little eyes swimming in circles behind his pebble lenses like tiny red fish, "begorrah etc., but I do that."

"Incredible!" I said, "Send for Arthur Koestler immediately. Perhaps you read it in the same book?" I was very defensive of my health hint.

"No", said Bob, "I've done it for years. It doesn't half make you fart something rotten." (NB. These may not have been Bob's exact words, but had he not thought he was in polite company I'm certain he would have used that line from one of Yeats' lesser known works.) "In fact", he continued, "I had a character mention the efficacy of brewer's yeast in my novel, *Vertigo*."

"Ah," I said. "Oh." Embarrassed pause. "The very novel I've just finished reading."

This, of course, highlights one of the problems with recounting, if not other peoples anecdotes, at least other people's facts. If you can't remember where you got them from or who might find out that you've stolen them, then don't use them.

This brings me to ace plagiarist and story-stealer, John Francis Brosnan.

Most of you will know John as a fading failure of a fan-writer whose PRIVATE EYE derived style was, even at it's dubious best, witless savagery, uncaring wounding unpleasant spurts of vitriol, vicious evil (oh God where's my thesaurus) - anyway, you get the picture of this nasty piece of work. In later years, when he could drag his alcohol-sodden body to the typewriter and

if he managed not to get his fingers stuck between the keys, he would write books like James Bond in the Cinema, which was not, under any circumstances, a word for word retelling of the scripts of the first seven Bond films with no credit to the authors; and The Horror People which, by the farthest stretch of the imagination, could not be described as a word for word transcription of speeches made by film stars into John's cassette recorder while he was still sober enough to hold it out; and Future Tense, which only a churl would call a collection of the best bits of John Baxter's seminal work, Science Fiction in the Cinema, together with the good bits from Peter Nicholl's Encyclopedia of Science Fiction. In fact, John's work made Malcolm Edwards' and Robert Holdstock's Alien Landscapes appear to be a triumph of originality. His fall from being a respected but misunderstood (ie. they thought he was good) fanwriter is now almost complete as his pathetic existence is only sustained by occasional articles in a magazine for the mentally sub-normal (and that's only the writers) called Starburst, where he sends his old fannish articles, their beer-stained and bogey-ridden rotting pages mistaken for original works - which was not a mistake made even when they were new.

Recently, this parasitic scum wrote an article called "It's Only A Movie" (typically, all his articles for Starburst have had the same title) about his experiences at SEACON '79 with Christopher Reeve, world-famous Robert Holdstock lookalike. Little did John know that I would find out about the article. The well-known mental sub-normal 'Snooper' Hansen spotted and shopped him. Now, you may have noticed that I'm a little marked with John and this is why. Everything that John wrote in that article as happening to him happened to me. This is annoying enough. It's doubly annoying because Rob Hansen had already asked me to write the history of my life and times with Christopher Reeve for this issue of EPSILON and trebly annoying because Brosnan bloody well got paid for it. It's quadruply annoying because he didn't even mention me once and quintuply annoying because I could have written it better (OK, he says he was writing down to his audience, but unless they were ahead of him in his descent into total moral degeneracy I don't know how that could be).

It's not that often that I can think of a good solid unreported story I could tell for a fanzine and that bugger had to pinch it the very month I wanted it. Send for Arthur Koestler and a big hammer immediately.

Actually, the only amusing thing to come out of this was that John had to leave one bit of the story untold because his audience was, well, young. In his article John mentions Derek Meddings who did the special effects for Superman and was at the con. Derek's attractive wife, Mrs. was also there and was being shown the familiarly-shaped Hugos before the ceremony. I was telling her the history of the awards and, holding one up, I said, "These go back a long way."

Smiling, she said, "I bet they do."

(Oh God, I have to say it. I never actually met Mrs Meddings. It was John who was there, not me.)

.....LEROY KETTLE.

((There now follows a classic reprint from the object of Leroy's vilification))

A TYPICAL VISIT FROM ROBERT P.HOLDSTOCK
A TYPICAL VISIT FROM ROBERT P.HOLDSTOCK....by JOHN BROSANAN.
A TYPICAL VISIT FROM ROBERT P.HOLDSTOCK

The door shudders as the boot thuds into it. Pickersgill groans and gets to his feet. He opens the door and Holdstock bursts into the room. He is carrying a portable typewriter in each hand and the handle of a third machine is gripped between his teeth.

"Hi gang!" he greets us. We both wince. It is our first wince of the evening but more are to follow. Holdstock then drops all three typewriters on the table, knocking mine onto the floor in the process. Then he begins his usual routine which consists of sorting through all our private papers and knocking over stacks of magazines, books and records. On a good night he may even knock over chairs, bottles, radios, record players and anything else that isn't welded to the floor. I've never seen anyone like Holdstock for knocking things over. The more valuable the object the harder he knocks it. He can knock something over more than ten feet away...and from a sitting position.

"And what have my buddies been up to this week?" he asks as he casually sets the TV rocking backwards and forwards with a mere nudge of his elbow. 'Buddy' is one of his favourite words. It always reminds me of a scene out of an American war movie with a crazed GI charging an enemy pillbox armed only with a can-opener and yelling: "They got Joe! The bastards got my buddy Joe!". I can't imagine Holdstock doing something like that for either Pickersgill or me.

"Nothing", I tell him as I continue to watch the TV set totter precariously. Pickersgill merely grunts as if the question wasn't even considering, which it wasn't. This annoys Holdstock.

"You guys really bug me," he says in his usual form of Americanese.

"All you do is sit and fester. Fester, fester, fester!" (Fester is another of his words) "You should be writing...creating! Expanding your mind! Getting out and meeting new people! Living! Having new experiences!"

"You'll have a new experience if you don't shut up," I tell him.

"I had a new experience with Jacky this week", says Pickersgill. He gives us the details which are, as usual, quite nauseating. I shudder.

"Gee," says Holdstock enviously, "but that isn't what I meant." He then goes into a lengthy description of what he has been doing during the last week. It includes the writing of at least 3 novels, 10 short stories, a major scientific breakthrough at the London School of Medicine where he does research, a sighting of the Virgin Mary while fondling his rosary, and the making of four women very, very happy. By the end of this Gróg and I are usually slumped back with our mouths open in awe. Then the subject invariably shifts to Macrocosm, Holdstock's true love ((Macrocosm was a fanzine he used to produce years ago. It published mainly bad fan fiction and excreble poetry)).

"The next issue is going to be great! Really tremendous! It's going to win at least a dozen Hugos! I was up until 3 am last night typing the stencils. I was typing for eight solid hours except for a few brief moments when I made love to the poor girl in the room next door. She's crazy about me. Says she never had an orgasm until she met me. Says I

have something extra that other men don't have. Haw, haw, haw."

Greg's mouth is still open but now there are little snoring sounds coming out of it. He's had a hard day in the filing department.

"Let's go for a drink", I suggest. One of my favourite lines, but it always upsets Holdstock.

"Gee whiz," he complains, "that's all you two ever do. Drink, drink, drink!"

"And Fester", I remind him.

"I came to do some writing", says Holdstock plaintively. "I was hoping we could collaborate on a novel or two." He always says this. It's part of the ritual of a Holdstock visit. I always answer with something clever like-

"Okay we collaborate on a novel, but after we have a drink. I'll do all the a's and the but's and the and's. You do the rest." He is never amused at this. But by this time the word drink has activated Pickersgill and he is lurching about the room trying to drag on various articles of what he calls clothing. Holdstock usually watches him with horror in his eyes. He doesn't approve of Greg's loosely cut underpants. "What do women say when you're trying to fuck them and you get undressed and face them in those huge billowing underpants?"

"Oh piss off!" is Greg's answer. Once he explained that he removes his underpants at the same time as his trousers. "In one sweeping gesture", is the way he put it.

Holdstock had no choice but to follow us down to the pub where a couple of drinks soon puts him into a goofy mood. He proceeds to tell about all the times he managed to fuck Jean that week. Then he interrogates Greg about his sexual activities. This time it is my turn to fall asleep.

Just as the night begins to develop a rosy glow Holdstock announces he has to go. The reason for this is that it's his turn to buy a drink but he excuses himself by saying something like - "I have to kill a couple of kittens for tomorrow's experiment" (vivisection plays an important part in his research).

"Rubbish!" we say. "At least buy us a drink before you go."

"I can't," he says, eyes wide with indignation, "I'm a student."

Then he leaps to his feet and before we know it his long legs have carried him out of the pub. He is gone, but not forgotten.

You can't ever forget someone like Robert P. Holdstock.

...JOHN BROSNAN

The above piece was written ten years ago and though originally intended for FOULER it first saw print in the second issue of John Brosnan's BIG SCAB (undated, but internal evidence suggests late 1974). It's being reprinted here because, after many readings, it still makes me laugh...and because it's short. Though many things have changed since it was written those who know them will recognise the protagonists, particularly Rob Holdstock of whom Chris Evans recently said: "If Rob Holdstock didn't exist it would not only be necessary to invent him but fucking vital!" One of life's true originals...

Now for you lot.....

...US COMMENT ON 'ENGLAND' V 'BRITAIN'.....FANART REVISITED.....IN...

LETTERS

LETTERS.....wherein some dare to disagree with the editor.

LETTERS

DAN STEFFAN

1010 N.Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046, USA.

EPSILON is quickly becoming my favourite personalzine, mainly because of how similar our thoughts are on many fannish topics. I find it quite fascinating to observe how you are approaching the task of pubbing a personalzine, in contrast with how Paul Skelton or Eric Mayer go about it. It's a fanzine form that I doubt I could comfortably handle.

Issue 10 was more like 7&8 than like 9 - but then you know that. It's really amazing how something like Kettle's piece last issue can change the overall personality of a zine. Issue 9 was much more like a genzine because of his article and the absence of anything like it in issue ten left me with the feeling that something was missing. Do you prefer the more genzine-like issue to your usual personalzine approach?

Despite the fact that I wrote a similar editorial myself in BOONFARK 5 I think your story of how you discovered SF was redundant when featured in the same issue as your EPSILON history. Were you stuck for subjects to write about, or were you just trying to publish in time for the Eastercon?

((As I mentioned in the last INTRO, that issue should have carried a NOTIONS column (which would have been sandwiched between the two columns it did carry), but being unhappy with what I'd written I decided to leave it out since I was, as you suggest, determined to get the issue out by Easter at the latest - if I don't set myself some sort of deadline nothing gets done. So the reason you felt something was missing was because something was missing. I am, however, surprised that you attribute this to the absence of a Kettle piece because the ninth issue was structurally identical to the seventh and eighth, the only difference being that the anecdotal material was supplied by Leroy rather than myself. I see EPSILON as essentially a personalzine but one whose format allows a particular section to be written by someone else from time to time - the format ensuring, in theory, that each issue is fairly well balanced. On reflection it's apparent that I didn't get the balance right last issue and this is because I was experimenting with the basic structure of the zine, which threw the balance off. Still, you can't expect every experiment to be a successful one.

I like genzines, indeed I consider them the basic fanzine form on which all others are variations, but I wouldn't want to do one at this time since it would inevitably end up being a pale copy of TAPPEN, given that there would be a lot of overlap in the pool of writers that Malcolm and myself would be trying to get material from.))

HARRY WARNER JR.

423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, Maryland 21740, USA.

CLASS OF '72 makes me feel very old. This sensation doesn't result so much from the fact that you discovered fandom so many years after I did, but from the different conditions under which you encountered science fiction and then fandom. Seeing a television series with a science fiction theme soon after your ninth birthday, for instance; I'd been a fan for a decade and a science fiction reader for about fifteen years before television became available to any great extent in Hagerstown. You got hooked on comic books early, another crucial step on your road to adult science fiction and fandom, but I had been reading the prozines for a while before comic books became available in quantities in the United States. You failed to find much science fiction in the library because you didn't know who wrote it, but I couldn't find much SF there because there was none of it in the children's room to which regulations at the Hagerstown public library confined me even after I discovered the prozines, and none of it in the tiny book collection in the school I attended. (Even after I became old enough to be released from segregation by age at the public library, there was still no science fiction available to me there except Verne, Wells, Burroughs, and a handful of other standards.) It was the same story with paperbacks: for all intents and purposes, they didn't exist in the United States until I'd already entered fanhood (even though paperbacks were already being published for mass audiences on your side of the Atlantic). No wonder there were so few fans in the early years of fandom.

I don't know if I was the one who addressed a letter to 'Wales, England'. But there is a good reason why England appears on so many envelopes addressed in the United States to fans who write United Kingdom at the end of their addresses. Postal clerks in this nation usually know about the existence of England but many of them are baffled by 'United Kingdom' and raise objections if asked to calculate postage on something addressed that way. If the clerks are that way I suspect the people who sort the mail are the same or even more so. That is why I put England on the envelope, as a rule: in the hope of getting it in the proper outgoing mail container immediately, and in the fear that if I use United Kingdom, a sorter will toss it to one side, planning to ask someone else about it, and forget it for a week or so.

((This sounds superficially reasonable, but as an excuse for wrongly addressing a letter '...Wales, England' it just doesn't hold water. The following equations (leaving out such things as the exact status of Cornwall so as to keep this simple) describe the set-up:

Wales + England + Scotland = Great Britain

Great Britain + Northern Ireland = United Kingdom

Thus, while incorrect to address something '...Wales, England' it's perfectly OK to address something '...Wales, Great Britain', and surely these peculiarly dim-witted people you tell me the US Post Office employs know where Britain is?

Other American writers also picked up this point.....))

GARY DEINDORFER

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Thanx for the recapitulation of EPSILON's saga up to now. Since I came in late on the party this helps me get my bearings. It is apparent that EPSILON is not getting older, it's getting better, and I'm glad to be in on the fun, and I will try not to call Welsh people, Cornish people or Scotsmen "English" anymore. I stand corrected on the gaffe of using "English" when "British" is correct. I was sort of aware of the distinction but it is something one forgets in the heat of first-draft letter-writing. I will be careful about that sort of thing from now on in my letters to you British fans.

BRIAN EARL BROWN

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I must make a conscious effort to call you people 'Britfen'. It's hard to keep all these Welsh, Cornish, Scottish, whathaveyou and English ethnics straight. You mean you're not all one people? (He said, with a laugh). However, unless Wales is an independant sovereign country '..Wales, England' isn't the same as '...Canada, USA'. A comparable example would be more like 'Washington DC, Virginia', since Washington DC is a separate part of the country and not a part of any state.

((The two situations aren't at all comparable. England, Scotland, and Wales are three small and old nations located on the island of Great Britain, and together with Northern Ireland they form the United Kingdom. While the UK is a political entity with a single central government separate nation status for it's component parts is recognised in such things as, for instance, the forthcoming World Cup soccer contest where each of these component parts are represented by a national side against the other nations of the World (or would have been if the Welsh side hadn't been eliminated in the qualifying rounds). The Union Jack is an amalgamation of the flags of England, Scotland And Northern Ireland (the Welsh flag is not included and not because of the undoubted difficulty of fitting a red dragon on a green and white field into the design, difficult though this is, but I suspect because of the Act of Union of 1536). While I am a British citizen I always fill in forms that ask nationality with the information that I am Welsh.

The set-up over here is the end result of quite a few thousand years of history so I can see how it might confuse others. Maybe I'll have to write an article for an American fanzine one of these days, explaining it to the best of my ability.))

It's hard to know which is worse; to constantly hear American beer being put down (everybody hates us Americans, you know), or to realise that it isn't much to talk about. But what's really bad is Canadian beer that tries to appeal to the American taste. Moosehead tasted like soda pop. It was disgusting. Most American beer strives to appeal to people brought up on soda pop. It's sweet, like pop, carbonated, and a little lacking in taste because beer's natural taste is bitter. Unfortunately, after saying that, I must confess that I can't hack Heineken Extra Dark or Guinness. They're too bitter for me.

Bob Shaw gave an interesting analysis of issue nine's cover. I don't think art criticism is so difficult as long as one remembers to explain very carefully what one is responding to and why that should be important. There is a stiff, tableaux quality to your drawings which is enhanced by your sparse and precise inking. This is not bad because you think in terms of scenes, which implies stories. Your covers for TAPPENs 1 and 2 are two of the great unwritten stories of fandom. Just what was going on, one wonders. Dan Steffan's very different style is very good for creating odd and funny caricatures, but I don't think he could do a scene as well as you.

((I think comparing Dan's style and mine is a bit like comparing apples and oranges - they aren't the same thing. Dan and Harry Bell though.... I hate to disillusion you but if you want anymore on those TAPPEN covers the man you'd have to contact would be Malcolm Edwards since all the covers I did for TAPPEN were drawn to his instructions.))

PETE LYON

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I should take up the topic of the criticism of fan-artists, particularly by other artists. Now, I suspect your method of doing so would be to laboriously define and sub-divide the question and attempt a reasoned answer. Mine I fear is not that. For one thing I am qualified to criticise, I have letters after my name to prove it (!), having taken my turn at the perpetual Art School Dance. I always say that the one thing you do learn at Art College is how to be an art student ie. how to justify any old piece of gimmicky crap you care to fob off on the lecturers. My considered opinion of fan-art is that by and large it is CRAP - but at least it ain't pretentious crap and that's saying a lot. Technique is nothing to do with it. Some argue that an artist must have the means to produce his/her end, but this is subordinate to the concept. Very often the means individual artists use are very primitive, but like personal signatures they are literally simply unique; a highly developed uniqueness at that. The trouble is that the "I know what I like" school of thought are in truth more accurately described as the "I don't like what I don't know about" brigade. Appreciation involves the willing participation and active enquiry of the observer. You don't fall into these limited categories, I hasten to add...at least I hope not.

I've always been reluctant to openly and specifically judge pieces by other fan-artists. This is because I feel it would reflect back on myself, people would view my opinions as arrogant, or my motivation as jealousy. Which is unfair, as many fans go over the top in voicing their opinions, and although these opinions may be violently disagreed with the motives for making such a statement in the KTF manner are rarely taken exception to. Perhaps it is because there are comparatively few accomplished illustrators in fandom whereas everyone thinks they can write.

For what it's worth I consider D. West as one of the best around, his wit and individuality setting him above the rest...present company excepted of course! Then again I don't know much about American fan-artists other than that, again, the standard of inspiration is abysmal.

JEFF SUTER

18 Norton Close, Southwick, Fareham, Hants, PO17 6HD.

Is introspection in the air, I ask myself? EPSILON 10 contained a personal re-appraisal of your fannish career and some personal history. It sounds familiar. Ah yes, I remember where I've seen it...in PERIPHERY 7, as yet unpublished. It is one of those quaint coincidences that seem too good to be true. I wonder if there is a kind of fannish gestalt that operates at an unknown, unconscious psychic level? This might account for the appearance of fanzines containing similar material, independant of each other, so close together. Does this mean that more fanzine editors will be bearing their souls for scrutiny in the near future? What Dark Secrets linger there? What does Malcolm Edwards conceal in his bone-filled cupboard? What secret desires are hidden by Greg Pickersgill? Will Joseph Nicholas come clean and admit that he thinks Heinlein is really triffic? The possibilities are endless, and fascinating?

When is STARFAN 2 coming out??? ((Eventually.))

CHUCK CONNOR

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I think everyone will admit that SEACON '79 was the biggest and best shot fandom has ever had in the arm with reference to 'new blood'. And already Martin Taylor is proving himself very adept at writing. But with this 'new blood' has come a change in values and ideals which is reflected in the more newer zines around at the moment.

((Those who came into fandom as a result of it would no doubt "...admit that SEACON '79 was the biggest and best shot fandom has ever had in the arm with reference to 'new blood' ", but I doubt if anyone with any knowledge of the past would. For instance, the last new influx of any size prior to SEACON occurred between the '74 and '75 Eastercons and as well as myself it included people such as Kev Smith, Dave Langford, Joseph Nicholas, the Harveys, and Paul Kincaid (to name only those who spring immediately to mind), all of whom have been very active members of fandom and produced good work. If you go back to the previous discernable influx of any size, that just prior to 1970, you come up with people such as Greg Pickersgill, Leroy Kettle, Malcolm Edwards, John Brosnan, Rob Holdstock, etc.,. These are all very talented people, any one of whom would have been a big deal in fandom whenever they had arrived so for all of them to appear at the same time was quite remarkable and they get my award as "...best shot fandom has ever had in the arm". If the latest influx were all that you claimed we wouldn't now be suffering through what is, with the exception of the period immediately after SEACON, the lowest level of fanzine output in the last ten years. Not that all is doom and gloom on this front, of course, and the newer writers who have impressed me are Jimmy Robertson, Phil Palmer, and Mike Ashley (though I still await a fanzine from him that is something more than a printed scream).))

Although I can see the point in having a tradition behind a movement, I can't

see why it should be held up as the be-all and end-all of things past, present, and future. I mean, for Christ's sake, if you dig underneath all that Golden Age you'll probably find more failures than successes. Everyone remembers the good times and forgets the bad, don't they?

((If you "..dig underneath all that Golden Age" you will find more failures than successes - that's going to be true of any period (we had FANZINE FANATIQUE back in the seventies as well) - but without giving the matter too much thought I can reel off nearly a dozen fanzines of the seventies, most of which were published regularly (none of this 'once or twice a year' stuff), that were of a quality that only TAPPEN of today's British zines can really match. And since I regularly re-read these zines (by way of giving myself something to aim for) they have not acquired the rosy glow of distant memories but continue to stand on their own merits.))

I find Ted White's comments a little confusing. "..fandom is a working anarchy, based on merit.." defeats itself because you cannot have anarchy and a system of merit working hand in hand with each other. A system of merit works on a 'majority opinion', and that sounds like a democracy to me, not 'no rules and anything goes' which is anarchy. And a working anarchy (? I doubt it could exist in any respect) would have no need of a history to look back on. In that respect do newer fans really need an "education" to produce something they believe in, product-wise?

((The problem here is that common usage has made 'anarchy' synonymous with 'nihilism' and it's this you mean when you use the term (as, it seems to me, did the punk movement) - ie, 'utter lawlessness, chaos, complete disorder' - whereas Ted used it in its original sense as a political philosophy that seeks 'a harmonious condition of society in which law is abolished as unnecessary' (both definitions courtesy of Chambers 20th Century Dictionary). While there is no governing body or set of laws fandom is a society that functions relatively harmoniously so it is an anarchy, in the classical sense. But at the same time people who show genuine talent are lauded according to their ability and as such fandom also functions as a meritocracy. The mantle of BNF is, after all, not one you can don yourself, but one which is conferred through the esteem of your peers. Fandom doesn't quite fit standard mundane models, so while "a working anarchy, based on merit" is not a perfect description it's as good as any I've heard.

With regard to all this "..do newer fans really need an 'education' to produce what they believe in..", I refer you to the NOTIONS column.))

JOHN D.OWEN

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EPSILON 10 wasn't exactly a scintillating issue, was it? Not from your point of view anyway. Far too much nostalgia and gazing wistfully back over your shoulder at where you have been, and not enough of your normal overview of the scene as it exists now. Which, to my mind, is the role that EPSILON has found for itself in British fandom. So this issue has to be said to be

marking time, and an indulgence rather than an issue. Perhaps you should call the next one 'the real issue ten' and continue where you left off in issue nine.

The main weight in this issue is all in the lettercol, with Bob Shaw's excellent letter, which hits the nail on the head as far as the relationship between fanzines, conventions, and fandom goes - and Bob's views on the way fanzines have been attacked and driven out of fandom in the past accord very much with my own. Fandom does need constant supplies of new blood (fandom as a vampiric force...now there's a thought) to keep it alive and moving - maybe even Csar Nicholas has realised that now.

As for 'the art of communication' - that's a red herring of enormous proportions, Rob. Art, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, and one man's art is another man's garbage (nowadays that's literally true! As is the reverse). Mind you, I do like the idea of Fannish Telegram Communications - it could be the new thing. I'd like to kick off with the following:

CSAR NICHOLAS ECSTATIC STOP HEINLEIN PRODUCES READABLE BOOK STOP QUOTE I ALWAYS KNEW HE HAD IT IN HIM UNQUOTE STOP

I tell you, it's a whole new area of fannish endeavour.

Right, that's the fun part over, now for Ted White - who qualifies for 'biggest twit' award this issue for his personal attack on me. He goes along great with his summing up of the Nicholas bits in issue nine, and his comments are pretty valid. But then he freaks out completely by making the ludicrous assumption, totally unfounded on anything to be found in my letter, that the 'Old Guard' must retire from the field entirely. Unadulterated crap. It would be a great loss to fandom to have zines like EPSILON, WALLBANGER, TAPPEN, STOP BREAKING DOWN, et al vanish from the scene, as would the loss of the 'Old Guard' as writers. There is nothing in my letter that even an idiot could construe as meaning that. So quitehow Ted White, who I've never communicated with in any other way than through the pages of EPSILON, came to such a conclusion I do not know. I suggest he go back and read the relevant letter again. Preferably word by word.

MICHAEL ASHLEY

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"That's it - you can go to bed now". Thanks Rob, we were nodding off anyway. Oooooo bitch!

It seems a general rule if you're stuck for a few pages to fill up to either write about how you got into fandom or how you started reading SF. You actually go and do both. Personally I think neither topic has enough intrinsic interest to warrant the amount of space they seem to get in fanzines, in particular the development of reading tastes (and there I was thinking - classically, at least - fans considered most matters concerned with SF pretty boring). That's not to say that articles on these topics need always be boring but just that they've got to be made interesting - they aren't inherently so. Judging by EPSILON 10 you appear not to favour this view. In particular your THE STORY SO FAR is little more than a sketch; perhaps a plan for a proper article. The

detail you give of EPSILON's history is really of little interest to anyone but yourself. I'm really not interested when and why you introduced triple-decker column titles. What I want to know about are creative problems, the long dark nights of your artistic soul, and so on. Why you carry on doing fanzines, what you're aiming towards, the limitations of fanzines. The nearest we get to any of these questions is your great let-down of a final paragraph. "It's been an interesting six years...given me a lot of pleasure". Doesn't that strike you as a bit weak? I mean, is that all? And what does tomorrow hold in store: "I intend to be around fandom for some time yet and to continue publishing EPSILON. I hope you'll be along for the ride". That's very meek and mild, Rob. Is just pushing out the issues a very satisfactory condition? For some, undoubtedly; but you are, from what I can gather, a Child of Pickersgill. Sorry, but that final paragraph isn't at all pleasing.

((I make no secret of the fact that the fan whose writing has had the greatest influence on my own is Greg Pickersgill...in terms of attitudes and an approach towards fandom. However we are different people with different modes of expression so this might not be apparent from the surface tone of my writing...and it's that tone you seem to be objecting to. Yes, it has been an interesting six years and yes, it has given me a lot of pleasure...and it's almost certainly had a quite profound effect on my life. I chose to express this the way I did because that's the way I express things. In reading your letter I am put in mind of myself as a teenager. Back then the only music I was prepared to listen to was the heavy rock of bands like Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple, music which was loud and fast and grabbed you by the groin. It seems to me that you demand this of fanwriting...which is both a very narrow view and an unrealistic one.))

The letters seem to be full of Americans going on and on about dead fanzines and dead fans; indeed Richard Bergeron appears to be little else than Walt Willis' mouth. One wonders if when he's got something to say he checks the known writings of Walt Willis to make sure it's been said before.

Was interested to see that those people familiar with Leroy Kettle's earlier material (eg. Mike Glicksohn, Jay Kinney) were much less impressed with his article than those for whom Kettle is little more than a name (eg. myself, Arnold Akien). Possibly older fans may be putting on their cynical, oh-I've-seen-it-all-before mask - something I wouldn't put past Glicksohn, brazen egotist that he is. This seems a good place to say that I thought Abi Frost's comments were fairly sensible in reply to the BNF (boring N.American fan). "I think I'm starting to get bored with fanzine fandom", says Glicksohn pompously as if fanzine fandom were solely for Mike Glicksohn's personal enjoyment. Aha, we reply, but surely that statement is the wrong way round?

WAHF: Roelof Goudriaan, Avedon Carol (with a late LoC on EPSILON 9).

- Next issue out when it turns up on your doormat. -
