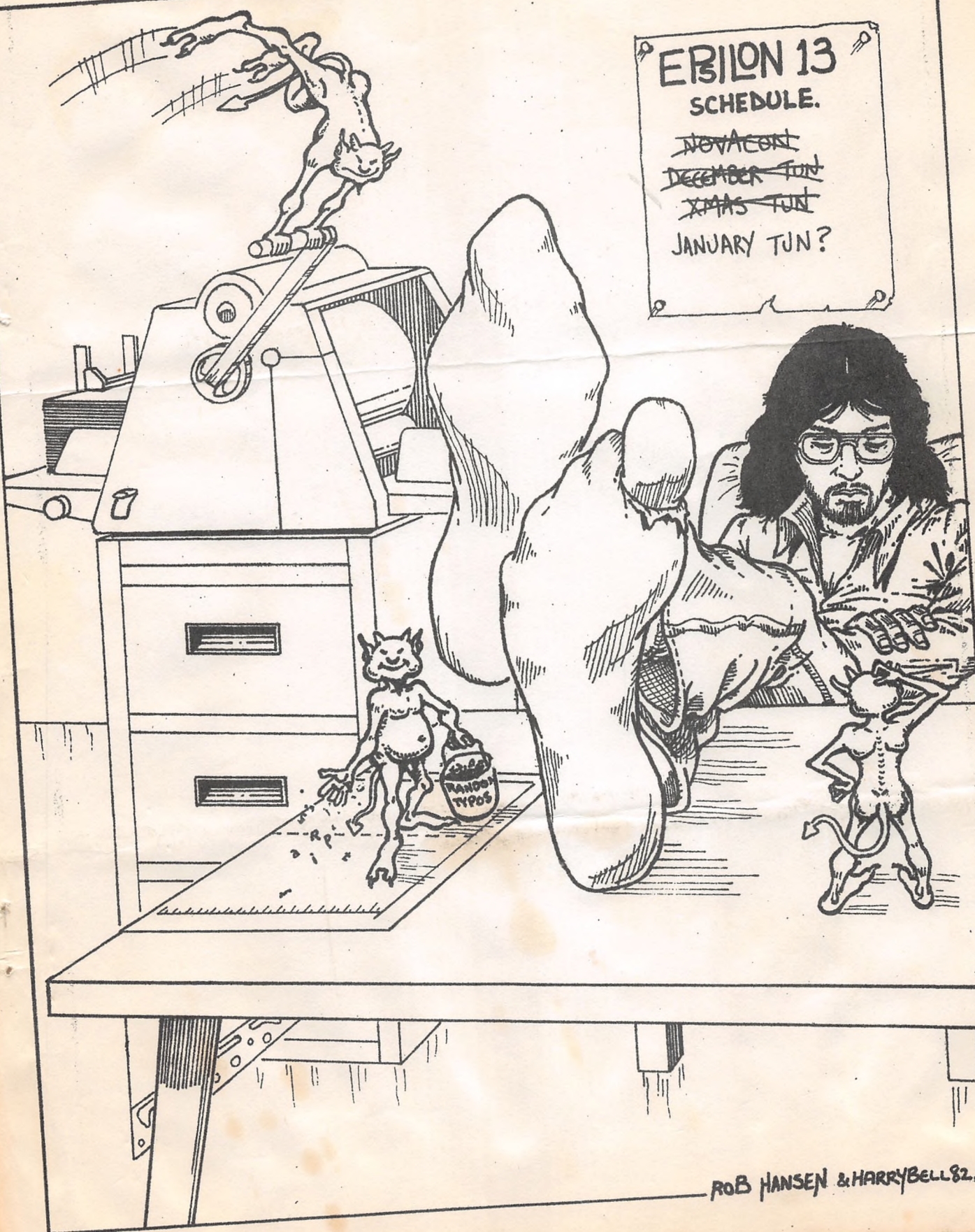


ERILION 13
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~~XMAS TUN~~
JANUARY TUN?



ROB HANSEN & HARRY BELL 82.....

...D.WEST...THE WOMEN'S APA...D.WEST...SHALLOW END...AND D.WEST...

NOTIONS

NOTIONS....wherein, as usual, I talk atcha.

NOTIONS

When I first heard of the women's apa that Chris Atkinson and Linda Pickersgill were setting up for British-born and British-based female fans I had mixed feelings about it. Initially I didn't understand just why they thought such a thing was necessary at all and I was unhappy about being barred from what promised to be a lively area of fanac at a time when the level of such activity in Britain seemed so low, especially when those organising the whole show were people whose fanwriting I particularly admired - which is the thing I disliked most. As I saw it Linda and Chris might well decide to publish all their future work in the apa, something I wasn't happy about, particularly when I got to read Linda's contribution to the first mailing (knowing my affiliations you can figure out how that came about), an excellent piece entitled 'How Women Get Pregnant'. As it turns out that article is scheduled for reprinting in a future issue of Kev Williams and Harry Bell's OUT OF THE BLUE and will thus receive the larger audience it deserves, and Linda assures me that any other pieces she writes for the apa that seem suitable for a larger audience will receive similar treatment (as, in fact, does her UNICON report elsewhere in this issue). If this is so, and if one assumes that other women in the apa feel the same, what is appearing in the apa that is 'not suitable' for a larger audience? The answer to this question is also the explanation as to just why the apa was necessary in the first place and though initially doubting such necessity conversation with Linda and Chris has given me some appreciation of their reasons for setting it up.

In Britain the number of women active in fannish fanzines still probably constitute no more than twenty per cent, if that, of the total and while this doesn't pose too many problems for the male newcomer it can appear fairly daunting to the female newcomer since, although some of us might like to think otherwise, a sub-culture that has been so predominantly male for such a long time has almost inevitably been shaped and formed by the wider cultural assumptions behind that single fact in ways that most of us are probably unaware of but unconsciously perpetuate. The women's apa is somewhere where this should not be the case and also a forum for the discussion of those problems peculiar to women in fandom (many I'm no doubt unaware of). The theory was that the apa would provide a place for women who might not otherwise consider submitting work to general circulation fanzines to develop their skills and also, perhaps, the confidence and will to move out into general fandom. Given the sorry history of apas in this country in the recent and not-so-recent past I was more than somewhat sceptical about the apa even getting off the ground, and particularly of its ability to attract those who had never written for a fanzine before, but to my (pleasant) surprise it appears to be thriving and has pulled in a number of people I would never have suspected were interested in writing for fanzines at all. It was also responsible, indirectly, for the creation of SHALLOW END.

SHALLOW END, according to Eve Harvey in MATRIX 44, is "...a new genzine which will not only stand as a zine in its own right, but also provide practical help and encouragement to anyone wanting to become involved in fanzine activity..". SHALLOW END came about as I understand it because Eve Harvey and Janice Maule, though invited to join the women's apa, disagreed with the apa barring men and though in favour of the apa's function in providing a place for the newcomer to develop basic skills they preferred the idea of a forum that was open to newcomers of both sexes. Later in her MATRIX piece Eve explains that SHALLOW END...

"...will cover as wide a range of interests as possible; technical advice on production, mailing lists, layout, editing etc; artwork; writing skills; what's been done before.....you ask us and we'll attempt to help you. We want you to use us as a sounding board, we'll give advice or print articles that will illustrate points by example. Hopefully the zine will develop into a kind of "written workshop" with constructive criticism either in print or, if you prefer, privately, (depending on the quantity of course). What will not be included is fiction. FOCUS and other specialist fanzines provide an outlet for fan fiction already, and we don't want to duplicate work already being done!"

In other words SHALLOW END is intended, in large part, as a writers workshop, this one being different in offering criticism of essay-type submissions rather than of fiction. The problem here is that criticism is rarely, if ever, successful in getting the individual concerned to alter his or her ways since most people learn how to express themselves in print by example rather than through criticism of their early efforts, by examining pieces of writing that have particularly impressed them, figuring out what makes that writing work, and applying the knowledge gained to their own work. So SHALLOW END will probably be most effective in its aims if the articles explaining various aspects of fandom to the newcomer are themselves good examples of fannish writing and so teach by example. For instance, Dave Langford's 'squib' in the trial issue is a good example of a lightweight and purely functional piece that does what it sets out to do in a straightforward and concise manner.

By now one or two of you are probably ready to use the above statement about the effectiveness of criticism as proof of the futility of fanzine criticism, thus revealing a lack of understanding of the purpose of such criticism which is, as with most fanwriting, to amuse and entertain (and before someone leaps back at me with that old saw about "the purpose of fanzines is to communicate" I'd better make it clear that as far as I'm concerned the purpose of all writing is to communicate - that is the nature of words - and that any writing appearing in the special context of a fanzine must have some purpose over and above this). The points made and opinions set forth in such columns are genuine reflections of the writers viewpoint, to be sure, but most critics are fully aware of how little effect their criticisms usually have on the individuals being called to task and occasionally admit this to their audience, as D. West once did when he referred to such columns as "...essentially a private joke...". Even West's justly acclaimed column in WRINKLED SHREW 7 - which was, as Chris Priest pointed out, one of the few attempts to establish a proper critical basis for fanzine

reviewing - needs to be seen firstly as a piece of entertainment, said entertainment also being intellectually stimulating, of course. It's all about performance, as D. has said, and even this column - which though not a fanzine review column is probably first cousin to them - while reflecting my views on and opinions of fanzine fandom fails in it's primary function if it doesn't amuse or entertain (or if I didn't enjoy writing it, of course, since you do these things first and foremost for your own amusement, and anyone putting out a fanzine who doesn't enjoy doing so is deranged).

Something that amused and entertained me greatly recently was D. West's seven-page letter in the thirtieth issue of Richard Bergeron's WARHOON. This missive laid into Ted White in an energetic and over-the-top manner that had me falling off my chair with laughter more than once, and not because of any animosity toward Ted White - whom I hold in quite high regard (and I suspect D. thinks more of him than his letter might indicate) - but because of it's cutting wit. I'm sure, however, that some of WARHOON's more literal minded readers will take it all at face value. Later D. says he considers it "...rather ironic that while American fanzines have generally been regarded with derision for the last ten years or so, American writers - such as Tom Wolfe, Hunter Thompson etc - have often been much admired and had a strong influence". Bergeron disagrees, commenting that "...while Wolfe is amusing enough Thompson is the only writer who ever made me feel sympathetic toward Richard Nixon...", but D. is plainly correct since some of the better con reports of the period show signs of having been written by people who have both read and absorbed much of the tone and structure of works such as Thompson's FEAR & LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS, while you have to look no further than the opening Author's Note in THE GREAT SHARK HUNT to find obvious echoes of D.'s own style. Since some of those who do not look with favour on Ted White may be made to feel as sympathetic toward Ted by how "...D. West has trampled with grandiloquent abandon..." all over him in much the same way as Bergeron was made to feel sympathetic toward Nixon after his treatment by Thompson, the influence of Thompson on West might be seen as being quite profound. Having re-read a fair bit of Thompson lately some of the stylistic similarities are obvious but this isn't in any way strange or reprehensible since, as most of us know, every writer absorbs and copies elements of both the style and tone of those writers he admires along with occasional 'bits of business', and given the nature of fanwriting Science Fiction seldom supplies suitable role models while fandom itself, though theoretically fertile ground, often seems a virtual desert. In such a situation the exemplars of the New Journalism such as Wolfe and Thompson are the best subjects to study for lessons that can then be applied to fanwriting as, presumably, were the Beat writers before them and, maybe, the writers in journals such as The New Yorker before them. It occurs to me that in this country Punch magazine may have served in this capacity in times past - as Private Eye might now - which explains a lot.

West has managed to loom large over WARHOON 30, his letter receiving long responses from both Bergeron and White while his WRINKLED SHREW column of five years earlier receives a belated but thoughtful response from Patrick Nielsen Hayden. As a way of introducing D. to American readers it succeeds well enough and includes such further background information as...

"...the current generation of British fans' crucial myth - the paideuma of their fannish culture - is one of Young Turks Throwing The Corrupt Bastards Out..."

Colourfully put, but not without some truth. The specific idea of each new fannish generation overthrowing the previous one (rather than **succeeding** them through that natural process of turnover involving new fans gradually coming in and old fans gradually leaving or becoming inactive) came about largely through the mythologising of the events of the early seventies and was parodied by D.West in ONE OFF 8 (Easter 1980) thus...

"Once upon a time there were a lot of cretinous wankers sitting around admiring each other's insipid prose and slobbering on through genteel orgies of mutual admiration when all of a sudden the Good Guys decided to get stuck in and really Kill The Fuckers."

The 'Old Guard' of the time saw things rather differently, of course, and D. parodied their view in the same piece...

"Once upon a time there were a lot of happy little fans sitting around being jolly and friendly in easy and pleasant harmony when all of a sudden in rushed certain vile, depraved, foul-mouthed, lecherous, uncouth, ill-mannered, and generally undesirable elements who proceeded to piss on shoes, be sick on carpets, steal drink, break furniture, fall over, and say Rude Words".

Even after cutting through all this you are still left with the fact that there are periods when a large...ah...Generation Gap is clearly present between established fans and newcomers, something about which, you will not be surprised to learn, I have a theory...

The first such gap of any consequence that I'm aware of was that between the established fans of the day and the so-called New Wave headed by Peter Weston and Charles Platt (in opposition rather than in tandem) in the early sixties. As the decade progressed that movement, such as it was, decayed and was in turn supplanted by those young fans who rallied behind FOULER in 1970 - which led to the romantic myth described earlier. However, it's interesting to note that the next large influx in the mid-seventies (people such as Smith, Langford, Nicholas, the Harveys, and myself) felt no impulse to overthrow or supplant these people in turn but instead meshed with them perfectly. Each time of upheaval and friction between Old and New seems to have come about when a large influx of new fans has coincided with a period of torpor among the established fans, which has led to the new fans operating almost in a vacuum, as it were, and doing things their own way for a long enough period that they've felt disinclined to follow the example set by the older fans when their period of inactivity has ended and they've begun publishing again. This also explains why my own influx didn't follow this pattern, since we came in when the then current fans were at the peak of their activity. This is How I See It....and also a digression.

D.West's huge article in TAPPEN 5, the 36-page 'Performance', is an extraordinary piece of work that is at times exhilarating, exasperating, hilarious, annoying, logical, illogical, and - most of all - overwhelming.

There is no way something this long can succeed in holding your attention through its whole length without being well-written and entertaining - which it is - but at times the quality of the writing and its sheer 'pace' are so dazzling that they blind you to its flaws. There are a number of points in this narrative where, in terms of straight reasoning, D. attempts to put one over on the reader, points where strong opinion and personal preference masquerades as logical argument and balanced reaction. I'm aware that most criticism can be dismissed as being subjective response presented as objective assessment - and it's a point to which, ultimately, there's no really convincing reply - but, as D. himself points out, without agreement on certain basic points argument and debate are impossible and even though you can start from the same basic points he does you won't always reach the same conclusions.

The sheer length of 'Performance' makes a response to it in its entirety next to impossible in the space available but it seems appropriate to tackle some of its assertions here on the basis outlined above particularly, in view of the attention the subject has received in the last two issues of EPSILON, his comments vis-a-vis fannish reprints. "The best place to read old fanwriting is in old fanzines", says D., a point worth remembering because when he asserts that...

"...fanwriting is the most context-dependant form of writing I can think of, and the context is not just the single fanzine itself but the whole fannish scene of the period in question. Without knowledge of this background a fannish article is either completely incomprehensible or loses so many resonances that it dies on it's feet."

...he contradicts himself. While D. might claim that "the best place to read old fanwriting is in old fanzines" the fact is that unless you were involved in fandom at the time reading individual fanzines from five, ten, twenty, or thirty years ago can be a frustrating and unsatisfactory experience because "the context is not just the single fanzine itself but the whole fannish scene in question". So unless you're familiar with that period there is too much in that old material that is "completely incomprehensible or loses so many resonances that it dies on its feet". Yeah, so surely reprint anthologies, far from being "strictly death and petrification", are in fact "the best place to read old fanwriting" because these are seldom just collections of reprints but usually contain enough background material to eliminate many of the possible points of confusion that result from a lack of knowledge of the period in which they first appeared.

This is only one response, and one that springs from D.'s own arguments, but another is that of Dave Langford who said, in WIZ 3, that...

"...fanzine articles in my early fannish days which should (according to D.) have baffled and repelled me (as stale dead relics of bygone performance) were uncannily able to conjure up, all on their own, the context which D. insists is necessary for true understanding and enjoyment."

There have been instances where I too have experienced exactly what Dave

describes and I wouldn't be surprised if certain reprint publications (like maybe the BEST OF TRUE RAT edition I was vaguely thinking of putting out a while back) need only the very bare minimum of explanatory material for the writing in them to be enjoyed as much today as it was when it was first published. And, though it's not something I'll personally miss since I've got almost all the articles and fanzines he's produced since 1976, I'm willing to bet that the reprint edition of D.'s fanzine work that Richard Bergeron was proposing would be accessible to most fans, given the nature of his writing, without a great deal of explanatory material. The faces and the fanzines may have changed but the game remains the same. Still, all of this ultimately comes down in the end to whether or not you like old fanwriting and can see any value in reprint volumes. D. plainly doesn't and can't and his comments in TAPPEN 5 are no more than an attempt to justify his preferences.

At the end of 'Performance' D. reveals that he "...started to write this article with the rather hazy notion that - just for once - I would abandon all distortion and tell the truth. But what the hell is the truth?" What indeed? For most of us there are usually only a few people, and maybe only one at any given time, with whom all masks fall away and to whom all secrets are revealed, but even when all is revealed have we necessarily uncovered the real 'truth'? I think not, though the editors of various soul baring fanzines that have in the past emanated from places such as Sunderland and the USA might disagree. Hunter Thompson has said that William Faulkner's idea that the best fiction is more true than any kind of journalism was the basis of his 'gonzo journalism' (having read a lot by both West and Thompson lately, and noticed similarities, the two seem to have become inextricably linked in my mind), the realisation that though a novel is a fictional construct it can through metaphorical symbolism reveal a truer 'truth' than the literal truth that attempts to report observed reality. D. expanded on this point in greater detail, and at greater length, but at the same time he claims to.....

"...have succeeded in being truthful in a limited way - bearing in mind the unavoidable distortions imposed by the need to select and compress, the biases introduced to make my text interesting and or entertaining, and the fact that a few things have been deliberately omitted as none of your damn business."

...while warning that "...to hold back - to perform with reservations, omissions, and evasions - denies all prospect of any success at all."

Depending on where you're standing the former can look an awful lot like the latter, and determining which is which can be purely a matter of viewpoint. How to tell which is which, there's the rub, because while one might decry that form of humorous fannish anecdotalism peopled by familiar caricatures some steps removed from the individuals they represent, who's to say that they don't, through symbolism, reveal a greater 'truth' about those people than would more literal depictions? The exaggeration of caricature does, after all, portray a type of 'truth' and who can say whether that which it omits is "...the unavoidable distortion imposed by the need to

select and compress " or "evasion"? Difficult stuff this, and something which could become bogged down in ever more tortuous digressions and clarifications if I didn't stop it right here.

After reading D.'s letter in WARHOON many may decide that sarcasm is the D. West form of wit, but then sarcasm has often been unjustly maligned and whether D. will be as a result of either that letter or the TAPPEN article remains to be seen. I hope not because although most of the comment the article will attract, and has in fact begun to attract, will be for the opinions it expresses, it also contains quite a few sections of fine anecdotal writing, such as the UNICON report, quite capable of being read and appreciated as pieces in their own right. D. West is, as Patrick Nielsen Hayden has pointed out, quite possibly the finest observer and recorder of fandom's social mores and rituals currently writing, something it would be a great shame to lose sight of in all the argument that is almost certainly still to come because what ever reservations you might have about his views (and though this piece has dealt mainly with the points where I disagree with D., there are many more where I agree with him), 'Performance' displays that area of his talent to good effect and is well worth cherishing for that alone.

THE LATE, LATE INTRO.....

What, you may ask, is this doing way back here? Well, it was all part of a doomed attempt to get this issue out by the January One Tun, my reasoning being that since there was this two-thirds of a page to fill anyway, and a count of stencils already typed indicated that I would need a two-page INTRO this issue if I was to get the odd (rather than even) number of pages needed to precede TRUFAN & JUNIOR, a little judicious re-arranging would allow me to dispense with those two pages and so speed up the whole operation. Having done the necessary shuffling and typed in the appropriate page numbers I ran off all the completed stencils on the night before the Tun, leaving me only this stencil and two others to type up after the duplicating session which could then be run off just prior to my leaving for the Tun. Ah, sweet idiocy. What happened, of course, was that Unforeseen Problems occurred during duplication which made the whole thing take a lot longer than it should have and wiped out the time allocated for finishing the last few stencils. Among many problems too tedious to mention was one which resulted in me having to hand-crank the duper when running off the cover. In so doing I discovered that I don't like hand-cranking and became convinced that it can lead to faned's elbow. I know it's considered terribly gauche to talk about the mechanical problems involved in putting a fanzine out but I just thought I'd show you some of the troubles that even people with what John Harvey has described as "...the best duplicator in British fandom..." have to put up with.

A very frustrating 'writer's block' has prevented this issue from seeing print before now (not only mechanical problems but problems with my brain also) but here it is, about six or so weeks late. The conreport that follows doesn't have the traditional triple-decker heading and this too is due to a problem, one which, fortunately or unfortunately, there's no room to go into...

UNICON IN RETROSPECT.....Linda Pickersgill.

I must admit to being a bit wary of attending a university convention. When I was first catching up on my history of British fandom I heard time and time again about the '76 Eastercon that was held at the University of Manchester, about how awful it was and what a disaster. My memories of the only university con I had attended in the US were no better. The '78 AggieCon was held at the Texas A&M the same weekend as an ROTC gathering and I was constantly clashing with some uniformed junior jive authority who told me not to walk on the grass or put my feet on the furniture. So who needed more of the same campus hassle? But then I'd heard some pretty wild tales about the previous Unicon that involved oat-cakes and beds moving down hallways. Add to that the fact that Roy Kettle was to be Fan GoH with Rob Holdstock the guest author, and I figured that the chances of having silly fun outweighed the fact that it was a campus con.

There was something oddly comforting in the discovery that Keele campus could have been any one of a hundred American campuses. There was the same scattering of buildings connected by roads and walkways, the usual dorm cubicles furnished with basic bed, chair and desk and the same student union bar and pool-room furnished with heavy, beer-stained, wooden tables and stools. If nothing else, I knew I'd feel at home at Keele. The oddness of it all hit when room-mate Helen and I bought our first drink at the temporary bar set up in the administration building/con hall. What do we do next? I was used to standing around hotel lounges and lobbies with a drink in my hand, not some large echoing university building. The sensible decision was to sit down and wait for someone interesting to come along. Before long the familiar faces started to turn up and to sit down with us. That is, they sat down on Helen's side of the chairs. On my side of the seating section I found a strange sight. There was a fella sitting next to me with longish hair, dressed in jeans and a faded and sleeveless denim vest. He was barefoot and had a hunting knife strapped to his belt as well as a sprig of heather in his hair and a manic look in his eye. Someone later told me that he was supposed to be dressed as a post-holocaust hippie, which made me real glad that I support the CND. I don't remember how the conversation began but I found out that this was his second convention and in my knowing-fan-meets-neo way I told him he ought to find it interesting. "Yes. Well, let's get the first question out of the way", he tells me. The first question? There were many first questions I'd encountered at cons: where are you from? are you married? want a back rub? how about a hit of window pane? Which would his first question be, "What science fiction writers do you like?" Oh, that first question. Well, I like Philip K. Dick and J.G. Ballard "OH. Oh, wow, yeah..." and John Sladek "Wow, yeah, wow..." and Michael Moorcock "OH WOW WOW YEAH WOW....". I felt this exchange was getting nowhere, and besides he looked as if he might burst with his next series of "wow"s. I left the conversation at that and made a polite exit towards the bar. Chris Evans had seen the whole episode. "Looks like you've made a friend there, Linda", he said, with an evil giggle. "Oh, wow", I answered.

Friday night we had a run-from-the-cretins. It was late. The main con hall was closed. The student union bar had closed. There was no place left

to go for fun but the dorm rooms. The burning question was: who had drink? "I've got a bottle of vodka in my room", Helen offered, little realising the effect her words would have on all within hearing distance. The cry spread like wild fire. "Helen's got a bottle of vodka in her room." "Vodka? Where?" "Helen's room." "Who's Helen? Point her out!" A small band of us began the trek back to Helen's room followed by a mass of unfamiliar yet thirsty-looking faces. There was a small wooded bit of campus to pass through on the way and as would happen to any red-blooded girl raised on B-grade horror flicks my mind started to recreate the depraved, maniac, campus co-ed killer scenes. I mentioned this out loud and in true gallant form Malcolm Edwards offered to protect me. With an arm around my shoulder he began to protect me deeper into the woods and off the beaten track. Fortunately Rob Holdstock literally swooped along and protected me back towards the group. As we reached the quad in front of the dorms I looked back to see the thirsty mob still following us. "Vod-ka!", I thought I heard them chant en masse. "Who are those people?", I wondered out loud. "Cretins", someone replied. "Eeeeeeeeeekkk!", I squealed. I was still spooked by the maniac-in-the-woods scene and the thought of a horde of mutant vodka-starved cretins emerging from the woods behind us was too much to handle. Someone must have picked up on my frame of mind because the next thing I know the cry goes up: "Run! Run from the cretins!" Still squealing I ran, not knowing where I was running to. In an attempt to protect me yet again Malcolm shoved me towards an alley. Considering that my co-ordination and balance were not at their peak it was no surprise that I fell slap-dab flat on my knees. In a milli-second flash of childhood regression the memory of falling off bikes and skate-boards came rushing up to the present. I began to wonder if I was running from the right cretins. I didn't notice the damage until I was back in the room with Helen, the gang, and the vodka. "You do realise that you've torn your overalls?", Helen asked me. I looked down at my knees and, sure enough, each one sported a ragged hole with an ominous rusty stain around it. Bloody hell! My first convention scars! Like a trooper I decided to continue partying while the alcohol kept the pain at bay. I was about to suggest that we look for other parties when Holdstock leapt to his feet and, with pointed finger, counted the number of people in the room. "One too many for an orgy", he announced, and slipped out the door. What a gentleman. After the orgy we pulled ourselves together and continued the search for fun.

It's amazing what a campus con does to the mentality of a science fiction fan. It's as if the atmosphere that says "student" combined with an event that says "con" is bound to equal extreme silliness. I call it the moron factor. What else would explain such incidents as Kettle throwing a neo into a fit of tears by telling him that there was no such thing as a Robert Heinlein? Or Helen getting lost trying to find our room while standing mere inches from the room door? And what about the giggling mystery voice claiming to be Heinlein, knocking at my window and asking me to come out and play? The moron factor struck us all but none so moronic as the paper airplane flingers during Roy's Fan GoH speech. Even most morons must understand that it isn't ever an easy thing to stand on the podium of a huge university auditorium and speak to a crowd as motley as that at Unicon. So OK, one or two airplanes would have been funny and lightened the mood but like the fella who doesn't

know how to time a joke, the airplane throwers didn't know when to quit and kept it up during the entire speech. It was a good speech, too, full of the standard Kettle wit and insight and Roy did a good job despite the pesty paper wads.

Holdstock received a bit of a surprise at his speech as well, though this one was a bit better planned and timed. Kettle had instigated a mock "This Is Your Life" to be thrown on Rob after his speech. Again, it was a very good speech and moved me from laughter to tears. As soon as he finished a few of us ducked behind a screen set up at the back of the room. Kettle held Rob on the stage and announced that this was his life. I was the first out from behind the screen. With my hair tied up in bunches I was the daughter Rob never knew he had. "Yes Rob, that kiss with a girl behind the barn all those years ago left you with more than a cold-sore. And here she is, your daughter....Herpies Holdstock!" Rob (alternately called Ray, Ron, Rastus etc., by m.c. Kettle) was also visited by his bank manager, his sex therapist, one of his own characters, his groupie, the man he stole his stories from, his social worker and last, but not least, an RSPCA representative holding up a stuffed black cat that was supposed to be the starving Finnigan he'd left at home. And I never thought I'd see the day when Rob Holdstock would go speechless.

Many of the silly moments seemed to centre around the student union bar. It was there that I saw a very silly Malcolm try to take on master domino fiend D. West and lose many bits of money. It was also there that a collection was taken up and presented to Simon Polley who could have all the pretty coins if he'd work over Steve Green a bit. Lord knows Simon tried. He and Steve wrestled and tumbled and lurched about waving pieces of bar furniture at each other. It was just like a scene from "Destroy All Monsters". It was also in the bar that we played a silly game that as far as I know is called "Names of...". It's the kind of game you groan about if someone brings it up at a party but enjoy once you get into it. Basically, you sit in a circle and set up a rhythm by slapping your thighs, clapping your hands, then snapping your fingers twice. The lead person chooses a category (names of flowers, for instance) and each person in turn must name something in that category on the snaps. You get the idea, I'm sure. Late at night the categories get a bit weird, such as names of incurable diseases or names of bodily fluids. Nothing too intellectual. This was a campus con after all. Inevitably the category "names of underwear" came up. Slap, clap, snap, snap, slap clap, "knickers" says Chris Atkinson; slap, clap, "brassieres" says Helen, "split crotch panties" says Malcolm, "fishnet tights" says Holdstock, "hernia belt" says Andrew Stephenson, "suspenders" says Jan Huxley, "wimple" says Peter Roberts. It's my turn next but I falter. "Wimple?". Everyone is staring at Peter quizzically. "Wimple?". I wondered if he ever pictured women in their wimples but Peter merely shrugged and rolled another cigarette. I suppose it takes all kinds.

But of course what are cons without the parties, or dorm room parties as the case may be. I can remember wandering in and out of numerous cubicles and dorm kitchens where parties seemed to be in constant process. The most memorable one took place in Phil Palmer's room on Sunday night. I hadn't

seen much of Phil that weekend, though I suspect he was the spectre in blue pyjamas who passed me in the hall during early morning treks to the loo (uni-sex dorms hold many such surprises). Nonetheless, he made himself well heard that night with a good selection of music played loud on his ghetto blaster. People massed into his room and some tried to dance, though it wasn't until later when things thinned out that Jimmy Robertson zipped up his leather jacket and showed us what dance really meant. Eventually Phil called it quits and the diehards amongst us had to continue the party in the hall where the most amazing sight was watching D. West functioning at a 45 degree angle. The second most amazing sight was Simon Polley. Now admittedly Simon was getting stranger and stranger as the weekend wore on. He started off serenading me with his vast Frankie Laine repertoire and gradually gave in to what can only be described as the call of a rutting walrus in heat. By Sunday night he was deranged and appeared at the hall party with his face covered with some sort of design done in blue-green ink giving him the appearance of a psychedelic Maori. Apparently there was some method to his madness because as Malcolm and I sat back in a slightly inebrated stupor and watched he swooped in on a woman who was talking with Holdstock and began biting and tugging at bits of her clothing between walrus yells. Rob, who was trying to have a serious with Amanda about the SDP, CND, and the merits of cricket, found this a bit distracting but Amanda never broke her train of thought. After much heated discussion on Rob's part, walrus moans on Polley's part, and uncontrollable giggles on mine and Malcolm's part, Amanda stood up and announced that Simon looked drunk and obviously needed someone to tuck him into bed. She took him by the hand and led him away, leaving only the sound of Rob's jaw thudding as it fell to the floor.

It was a good con. Despite the fact that I've mentioned very few of the con activities themselves I did attend some of the programmed items and found them much the same in character as the parties and other silliness. The drinker's gourmet contest was a good laugh and the committee's production of "Blunderbirds Are Go" was priceless, even if I never have seen "Thunderbirds" and didn't get all the jokes. I feel that I've really missed out on some good fun by missing the first two Keele UniCons and feel a bit sad that there will never be any more quite like them.

...Linda Pickersgill.

NOVACON NOTES...

World famous sci-fi hack and human tripo? Robert P. Holdstock was not at NOVACON due to an almost total absence of money. A number of his buddies, unable to comprehend why Holdstock has yet to be a Guest of Honour at a NOVACON, harangued the committee in an attempt to get him made GoH next year. Avuncular Geordie and Laurie McMenemy lookalike, Harry Bell, even went so far as to start a campaign to achieve this goal, a campaign whose twin slogans are: "Why isn't Rob Holdstock big enough?" and "How big does Rob Holdstock have to be?". We want you to lend your support to this prominent and upstanding member of the SF/fan community.

*

*

Harry Bell informs me that Ian Williams, a short and bespectacled librarian, has written a novel about a short and bespectacled librarian who falls into another dimension and becomes a heavily-thewed he-man who generally wreaks havoc with his mighty weapon and gets laid a lot. Is this what they call wish fulfillment? Harry also reports that Ian's next novel will feature "a sympathetic female character". I wonder how he'll work a short and bespectacled librarian into that one.....? Both will be submitted to Gnome Press.

*

Having been appointed to entertain us by the con committee Jim Barker once again conned a number of well-known fans into taking part in the bizarre and peculiar games he devises for these occasions. One such game had a member of each team standing on a chair while his teammates filled the baggy overalls he was wearing with balloons, some of which had 'cabbage' written on the side. Another had Harry Bell complaining bitterly that Jimbo had stolen his toothbrush from their room and it had been used in the game to brush John Jarrold's armpits. "What would the Americans make of all this?", I wondered, thankful that when Jim had called for volunteers, and Greg Pickersgill had shouted my name, I had escaped by hiding behind a pillar. At one point Jim asked the teams questions on fandom which enabled secret masters Hansen and Pickersgill, watching from the audience, to display their knowledge of the subject in that smug and know-it-all fashion that is so infuriating in others. One question, however, baffled the both of us. "What", asked Jim, "are the words firewall and firejag acronyms for?" Firewall? Firejag? What was he talking about? It soon became apparent this was another example of Jimbo's mangling of the English language and that the words in question were 'fiawol' and 'fijagh'. Barkerese/English dictionaries are being prepared for Albacon.....

*

At one of the meetings of the Blackpool in '84 Eastercon bidding group I am a member of the vexed question of what to call the convention came up. Since the majority of the SEACON '75 committee and some of the prime movers of the SEACON '79 committee were members of the group the obvious name was SEACON '84. It was decided, however, that while we undoubtedly had the right to use the name it could be seen as an attempt to cash in on the success of the two previous SEACONS, so we settled on the name 1984CON. Imagine my surprise, then, when at the NOVACON it was revealed that John Brunner's combined Easter-con/Eurocon bidding group had decided to call themselves.....SEACON'84. Ain't fandom strange?

QUIZ TIME-(a chance to test your knowledge).

Spot the error in the following statement by Peter E.Presford as printed in his fanzine SING ME A SONG...

"Many issues of STOP BREAKING DOWN were in effect ponderous; and it was only the light-hearted banter of Kettle that saved them."

The answer, of course, was that apart from a single LoC in one issue Kettle never appeared in STOP BREAKING DOWN. Keep taking the pills, Pete. Further quizzes can be expected as the half-arsed comments present themselves.

....TO FIND OUT WHO SHALL SPEAK FIRST WE PLACE OUR HAND IN AMONG THE....

LETTERS

LETTERS.....and the one we pull out is from.....

LETTERS

DARROLL PARDOE

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You obviously think fanhistory more important than I do, but I'm still at something of a loss to understand why. Good writing from the past, certainly, retains its appeal, but simply because it is good writing, without reference to its historical status. Similarly, Laney's memoirs are worth hanging onto, but as a curious character study rather than because of their importance to the history of 1940s fandom.

I saw FANHISTORICA when it appeared. It was an interesting read, but not worth hanging onto permanently. This brings me to another difference between our philosophies. I am not a supporter of the 'Willis Dictum' that fanzines should be preserved at all costs. A few fanzines I do keep, for one reason or another; a few more I dismember and keep individual bits from; but most fanzines, after a while, I destroy. Why not? They've served their purpose, and after a certain interval fandom has moved on and left them behind. Very little in fanzines is more than ephemeral, and that accords with what I see as their role in our society. Let others preserve, if they wish: I have no reason to do so, or to actively encourage such hoarding.

Perhaps part of the answer is that the fandom of the sixties and seventies was a fandom I participated in. I have my own memories of those years, and should I wish to revive them I can seek out fellow-travellers from those times and indulge in reminiscence with them. Further back, the forties and fifties, was so long ago that it seems to have little relevance to fandom today anyway. The fun, the interest, and the creative satisfaction for me comes from mingling and writing now.

MICHAEL ASHLEY

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It seems to me a curious notion that "old fanzines should always be passed on to other fans". Most fanzines shouldn't have been published in the first place. Usually and hopefully they pass into thoroughly deserved oblivion as soon as possible. I can't see the sense in actually preserving and cherishing last year's junk. To those that dislike them they can bring no pleasure, to those that do like them they become a harmful influence. Certainly in this home whole runs of old fanzines are dumped in the dustbin with great frequency while some of the less comprehensible foreign material is shredded straight after coming through the letter-box.

I suppose this obsession with hoarding tatty fanzines is part of the usual fan mentality of collecting: those huge collections of unreadable books, rack upon rack of unlistenable records. An alien concept this; in fact during the last month I've gotten rid of all my SF magazines to a friend who said he might be interested in them, sold off half my records to Beans at Croydon,

and deposited various fanzines in the bin. The thought of such unwanted detritus piling up around me is irritating (besides all these abstract notions about being shackled to the past - after all, it's easier to buy a pile of new records if you've got the room to store them in, mental and physical).

Lilian Edwards produces one of the most pertinent statements about your fanzine I've seen: "I just yearn for a little something to upset your regular, immutable features". Yes indeed, EPSILON is not so wildly exciting as one might wish, despite all these manufactured debates. Not much hope for the future either as you unequivocally claim that you're "not interested in unsolicited articles, fiction, or artwork". One's tempted to ask, well what exactly are you interested in then? I know why you say what you do but it's always dangerous to be so didactic about it. You must have enough imagination to be able to visualise an EPSILON with interior artwork and others (unsolicited) articles. Similarly, in reply to John Owen's comment that you should be searching out new talent you give the impression that even if such new talent were available you wouldn't be too quick at spotting it since you seem so sure already that it doesn't exist (though you're not as far gone as Paul Kincaid: "I can't remember the last time a fanzine aroused enough interest to make me want to respond", "I'm shattered anyway", "the thought of plowing through that mountain of paper is just beyond me", "in all probability I will not bother to dig them out", "I haven't read a single thing that I was given at Channelcon", "I probably never will". Is Paul Kincaid dead?).

((Quite how you interpreted my reply to John Owen - "If you know someone capable of doing this sort of thing, and doing it as well, I'd be very interested in being put in touch with them" - as indicating that as far as new talent is concerned I'm "...so sure already that it doesn't exist" I can't imagine. And I find it remarkably easy to visualise an EPSILON with interior artwork" since the first two issues carried plenty of it, but that's one particular path I'm not overly interested in travelling again.))

I do not know who Rich Brown is and I can't follow too clearly the point he is trying to make. However I do notice an arbitrary distinction between people he terms "us" and those he calls "them". "We" are fannish fans, "they" are media fans. I don't know why he looks down on the latter; as far as I can tell from my own experience, people who design their own costumes, dream up exotic situations to enact, and generally immerse themselves in a fantastic fictional universe seem to have rather more imagination, humour, and zest for life than those for whom a good time seems to consist solely of getting pissed and publishing semi-literate, dull fanzines.

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

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There is about EPSILON an almost overpowering smell of the past, a sense that whatever is happening in British fandom at present cannot possibly compare with what was happening in British fandom during the seventies (and specifically the late seventies, when people like you and I first got involved).

((I think few people would argue that fanpublishing is in a depressed state in this country at the moment - by which I mean only that

there aren't enough, good or bad, being published - and for that reason alone I think the fandom of the moment "cannot compare with what was happening in British fandom during the seventies", but if I truly felt that no-one else was going to come along and be as good, in their own way, as many of those in the seventies were I would have packed up my bags and left the scene before now since there wouldn't be a whole hell of a lot of point in remaining involved in something that could only deteriorate and decay. But then I don't believe that - if I did I would not have made a point of naming those among the newer writers who I think have got what it take because, by your reasoning, I would not have accepted that they could exist.))

Don't get me wrong - I'm as interested in fanhistory as you yourself appear to be, but somewhere or other we have to draw the line between 'interest' and 'obsession'. And while it's one thing to be interested in the past, in determining why we got where we are today and why things happened as they did (the real tasks of historical analysis, in other words), it's quite another to be obsessed with it, feeling the need to hold up the past as some sort of golden age to which we should endeavour to return, an Eden from which we have been unfairly expelled, and constantly harping on the wonderfulness of things way back then. Yet it is clearly the latter to which you have fallen prey, and it's an obsession so paramount and so all-embracing that you're in deadly danger of turning yourself into the British equivalent of Ted White, quoting endlessly from the fanzines of the past and using them as the substance of your writings rather than coming up with anything original, anything of yourself.

(("What did he say, doc?"

"Dr. Nicholas, one of our most learned psychiatrists, has diagnosed schizophrenia along with an obsessional fixation on the past, an urge to get back there that indicates a strong desire to return to the womb and probably latent homosexuality as well."

"Is...is there any hope for me, doc?"

"Well son, I won't raise false hopes, but with plenty of cold showers we may be able to contain it...if we can rely on Dr. Nicholas' diagnosis"

"W...why shouldn't we, doc?"

"Well, he has been showing signs of deep-seated paranoia lately....."))

On the other hand, it may well be that I've just lost interest in the subjects to which EPSILON seems primarily devoted - there was a time, two or three years or even more ago when, without a moment's hesitation, I would have chimed in with my thoughts and opinions, participated in the great ideological debates that now fill your pages; but that, as I say, is the past, and at present my attention and energy is directed elsewhere. Which isn't to say that it won't one day be redirected back but, then again, who can say what's likely to happen in the future?

But perhaps I'd better not go on any longer, because if I do I'll no doubt find myself quoted out of context and used as someone's whipping-horse. Which latent quasi-fear, you may or may not be interested to learn, is part of the reason why I write so few LoCs these days - since somebody, somewhere, is only going to use what I say as the excuse to attack me all over again for something I said in 1979 or 1978 or whenever, what's the point of saying

anything? Damned if I'm actually going to bloody offer myself as a target for their ire and vitriol: let the sods work for their jollies. And perhaps, just perhaps, when they've managed to bore even themselves with their endless rehashes of my putative "career" and their tediously pointless attempts to construct a "legend" around me, and have found something new to talk about, I'll return to join the discussion. Although that's not a promise either, of course.....

TED WHITE

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EPSILON 12 was a good solid issue: very much in and of contemporary fandom in a way which may not make it something Joseph Nicholas will want to reprint from ten years from now, but does give me considerable Food For Thought (while running the ol' mimeo for hours on end - tomorrow we depart for Chicago and BOONFARK 7, totalling around 76 pages, is still only half run off) in a way I want you to know that I appreciate.

I also appreciate the clever way you've arranged the letters in this issue so that each letter effectively introduces the next (or when it doesn't your comment on it does). Little touches like this impress me with your increasing skill as an editor.

((Then again, this is what I've been attempting to do for the last few issues so the fact that you (and Brian Earl Brown) noticed it could mean I wasn't subtle enough with it. Good technique should be almost invisible, after all.))

The short section of juxtaposed quotes was quite effective, making in half a page or less a point many of us have taken much more space to attempt less successfully. Of course Joe will simply point out that those are old quotes, dating back as much as half a year, and that it is the height of asinine foolishness to expect him to remain accountable for them at this late date, and besides which, that was the Old Joseph Nicholas and the New Joseph Nicholas has already disavowed him, and so on for at least a page.

Recently Bergeron passed on to me replica copies of STOP BREAKING DOWN 1-6, which I thoroughly enjoyed.....

((When I mentioned this to Greg he was quite amused because he himself has heard of other bootleg copies doing the rounds - all, presumably, lifted from Rich Coad's copies. Still, if you're going to do this with any fanzine SBD is more worthy than most...))

I agree with Taral that Canadian fandom doesn't seem too active in fanzines. I found that only nine copies of GAMBIT 56 went to Canadian fans (compared to the 52 copies which went overseas), some of whom, like Bill Gibson and Boyd Raeburn, aren't very involved with Canfandom. I'm sorry that Taral himself seems to be withdrawing in terms of his own fanac. Canadian postal rates did double this year, but I should think Taral might get by with writing half as many letters of comment, rather than almost none.

PONG's "private universe" included about 150 people. If this is taken to be the 10% of "North American fandom" which was not absent from our "private universe", is Taral implying that the 90% who were make up a fandom

of 1,500 people? Or is it simply that the Taral himself felt left out because we didn't print more of his infrequent and cranky letters? Taral was, I think, a Bigger Frog when he put out DNQ with Victoria and resents having been eclipsed - although as nearly as I can tell his gradual ebbing away from fandom has been entirely his own doing. Whatever; he received every PONG, although we did not receive every DNQ (especially after our subs ran out). Do I "measure (my)self against other fans" in PONG? I was unaware of it. PONG's "private universe" may have excluded some of the current Frogs in the NorthAm pond (one has to draw a line somewhere), but it included a lot of fans who used to be active and some of whom became reactivated through PONG. I'm sorry if this strikes Taral as "claustrophobic", because I've quite enjoyed it. PONG either restored contact for us with many old friends or put us in touch with new ones - like you Brits. Isn't that what it's all about, really?

TARAL WAYNE MACDONALD

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"I've always hated the use of random fillos to break up pages...since it seems unimaginative and reduces the art to little more than interior decoration." That seems about as good a comment hook as I've found in a fanzine in the last little while...

To add weight to my comments to come, British fanzines run relatively few interior illos at all, and most of those are by artists who are also the editor's drinking buddies.

Lately, we'll all admit, the bulk of the fannish action in America seems to be coming from a small core of neo-classicists who huddle around a Falls Church-Seattle axis. There are several zines associated with this core, but the principal vehicles of the neo-classical movement have been PONG, TELOS, and the re-incarnated WARHOON. What these fanszines have in common is the Bergeron Ideographic Look. Bergeron, of course, is a Cubist, but he also blew up the simple illos drawn by Lee Hoffman and others so that they took on some of the character of his own work - the lines become boldened, space-enclosing forms like Chinese Ideographs. But that's not important. What is important is the strong stamp of personality imposed, by Bergeron's art ideas, on WARHOON.

Although no-one to my knowledge has been imitating Bergeron's Cubist inclinations, the notion of a uniform look has impressed at least two influential acolytes. PONG, throughout its life, didn't look the least bit like WARHOON, but like WARHOON every issue of PONG looked pretty much like every other issue of PONG. It had it's "look", courtesy of Dan Steffan's 200 itty bitty illos in the boxes. TELOS also has its "look", due to Teresa Nielsen Hayden.

So?

The point is that fan art has, in a way, been ideologically banished from the currently fashionable zines - from "where the action is".

Yes, the itinerant fanartist can still submit his wares to the KRATOPHANIEs, MAINSTREAMs, and slightly less illustrious zines on the peripheries of "the action". There are reasons, though, why they aren't part of the current excitement. Most of the best zines in America are infrequent to the

point where they are still using up art contributed in 1968... At best, one can lay a small number of illos on Eli or Jerry and then they have a lifetime supply of the artist's work, and won't be publishing the last of it until 1985...

Under these are other zines (HOLIER THAN THOU, RUNE, and so on) that use art at an appreciable rate, and are zines that an artist would not be ashamed to appear in. They aren't, however, "where the action is". Ted White won't be waxing about them ten years from now. Dick Bergeron won't be holding them up as models of superior fanwriting and je ne sais quoi. And below that again, there is the level of clubzines, mediocre zines, and crudzines that fanhistory routinely passes by. The artist needn't feel ashamed of art appearing in such places, but neither can he work up much enthusiasm. Where does that leave the artist - where does that leave me - with his reams of pretty pictures that need expensive duplication?

But, okay, I rather agree with the current fannish ideology. I find most corner illos a bore too. I agree that the printed word is more important - in the fannish context - than the picture. It's inarguable that too many pretty pictures are totally forgettable. It's down in the record (last issue to be exact) that I think that publishing one's friends is a more fannish act than filling a zine full of strangers. All that is granted. Moreover, by publishing zines with mostly my illustrations I, defacto, have a "look" too.

Let's try turning the tables, though.

Let's pretend that for some inscrutable reason (such as the post office waging a war against fandom with \$1 first ounce rates) fans are publishing zines of two and four pages. Articles are, by necessity, short. Editorial requirements are such that contributions longer than, say, a page are routinely not accepted. Then we may imagine our parallel-world Chris Atkinson sending her 'Life With The Loonies' round the circuit and getting rejection slips. "Too costly" says one - "not fannish to be long" says another... So it is with fanart. There's acres of good square inchage out there, waiting to be published, but nobody can be bothered. "Too costly." "Not fannish".

Not true.....

In my diatribe about fanart I've necessarily had to touch upon the current state of American fanzines, forcing me to reiterate certain points. Your remark about the "claustrophobic feel" I observed in American fandom makes me think that you've misunderstood. It is true that fandom over here needs to execute a strategic withdrawal of sorts, to regroup and solidify its ranks. On the other hand whole regiments and armies seem to have been left outside the defensive perimeter. Although PONG et al is recognised as the most visible centre of the True Fannish Spirit at the moment (or was), there are outlying centres of resistance. A couple of them I've mentioned, KRATOPHANY and MAINSTREAM. I've no doubt that their presence is welcome in the fort. And there's GROGGY, BLATANT, BEARDMUTTERINGS, WING WINDOW, allies of trufannishness at least. From there, it seems, we strike off into enemy territory. One bumps into nominally hostile bodies such as FILE 770, HOLIER THAN THOU, or RUNE, but often comes across forgotten kin, such as RAFFLES. How do we fit in things like NEW CANADIAN FANDOM, WoFAN, THE SHADOW LINE, COVER, WILD FENNEL, GRAYMALKIN,

and MIMOSA? All of these are pretty good zines in one way or another, but all stand outside the defensive perimeter formed by Ted and Dan. This is what I meant by "claustrophobic". Not that fanzine fandom is turning its back on Trekkies, but that fanzine fandom over here is more than PONG, BOONFARK, GAMBIT, TELOS, and WARHOON.

BRIAN EARL BROWN

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The claustrophobic feel Taral mentions is not that a small group in Seattle and Washington DC are a tight knit support group but that they have been rather conscientiously excluding 90-95% of the rest of fandom in the US. It is very much a Ted&Dan&Dick&Patrick&Teresa clique and if you're not part of the fannishly hip then fuck you! I don't intend to measure up to anyone and I intend to remain a fan. This is just a hobby, after all, someplace I come to mess around. It's not the real world where I have to be on my best.

((Oh come off it, Brian! All this stuff about a "clique" that is "excluding" 90-95% of the rest of fandom in the US" is a load of old bollocks...and you know it! As Ted points out elsewhere in this loccol an exclusion of 90% of US fandom, given his current print run, would mean that to reach all those you feel he should would mean sending out 1500 copies. Is that what you're suggesting should be done? That sort of print run is OK for those semi-pro publications that win the fanzine Hugo with tedious regularity but it would totally destroy the intimacy and immediacy that make fanzines so attractive in the first place. Much of the pleasure in doing a fanzine comes from knowing who the majority of your readers are, something next to impossible when they number 1500. As few fans could afford to produce so many copies, or should want to, most prefer to send the few hundred they do produce to those people whose own activity they are most interested in. I don't see how fandom could function without this sort of selectivity and if that seems like cliquishness or elitism to you, then tough shit! There really isn't a whole hell of a lot that can be done about it.))

In the US most conventions have an FGoH and these people are usually given transportation costs, lodgings, and maybe a meal allowance for appearing. I don't know whether British cons have similar arrangements or not but while they may have trouble finding fans worthy of honouring it's all the worse in the US where the great number of conventions have long since used up all the truly active and praiseworthy fans. Too often FGoHs have become some crony of the concom and in such cases I'd just as soon the convention didn't have an FGoH at all. So I am in complete agreement with your comments on FGoHs, particularly that TAFF delegates be made FGoH at Eastercons.

KEVIN SMITH

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I confess to being confused by your arguments about fan guests of honour. Or perhaps you're confused. One of us is, at any rate. You start with the single question: "Why? Why should we make anyone FGoH?" This is a very general

question, based on a general principle. It is also virtually unanswerable. The best I can do is: "for the same reasons we give knighthoods and OBEs" - which is a hint but no real answer. The thing is, you then leave this very general question, forget about it entirely, and move on to the very particular matter of there being few or no fans around at present who are worthy of being fan GoH at an Eastercon, or at all. You realise, of course, that this is a totally different matter, and takes for granted that the answer to your "why" question is something along the lines of "dunno, really, but it's probably a good idea." The one is a matter of principle, always applicable, and the other is particular to our time and condition. The development of your argument, in other words, has nothing to do with your initial question, absolutely nothing.

Not that I think either question or argument is misguided. It is a good idea to ask why now and again, and your analysis of what makes a good fan GoH at a con and how few British fans qualify in that respect is pretty accurate. I do think it is wrong, however, to extrapolate from now into the indefinite future. There may well be occasions when there is an obvious choice for a fan GoH who would be universally acclaimed - Lee Hoffman at Chicon IV, for instance. In 1986, when EPSILON 30 has appeared, might not the name of Rob Hansen be on everyone's lips? Paul Turner might, in the 1990s be a great and worthy fan. Dulcie Jackson could be the dominant influence of the 2010s. You don't have the right, now, to deny future con committees a fan GoH. Not that you could, anyway, fandom being what it is. However, you are right to insist that a fan GoH is not necessary to an Eastercon - a conclusion reached also by the Channelcon committee, so you and the 1984 show can hardly be said to be setting a precedent.

I also don't like your justification of the American TAFF winner as a fan GoH. I like the idea itself (Metrocon was also going to use it, and would have included the GUFF winner too, had there been one) but your argument seems to squirm a bit. To justify the TAFF winner as fan GoH on the grounds that he or she (the TAFF administrator remains strictly neutral) is a guest, and therefore deserving of the honour, rather than that she or he deserves honouring and should therefore be made a guest, is to have things backwards. I suspect you got carried away with the sound of that last line, which has an epigrammatic quality about it, and didn't stop to think through all the implications. Basically, the TAFF winner, simply by being the winner, has demonstrated in a quasi-objective way that he or she is worth honouring. This is what you meant to say, and what you were saying before you were seduced by the epigram. It is a strong enough argument by itself, and needs no such embellishment.

((Yeah, you're quite right - I'm a sucker for an epigram. Before leaving the vexed topic of FGoHs there's another point of view to hear.....))

TERRY CARR

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Your NOTIONS column in the latest EPSILON reminds me of how quickly fannish traditions are forgotten. We all know how quickly they start ("anything done once in fandom is a tradition"), but sometimes we forget how

short-lived they can be: fandom is not only a source of instant immortality but also of suddenly dead immortals, it seems. I'm referring to your remarks about how TAFF winners should automatically become Fan GoH at British conventions - and, by presumed reciprocity (it's only fair), at US worldcons too. As I recall, during the early years of TAFF this was taken for granted, and indeed, when I won TAFF in 1965 I thus became Fan GoH at the London worldcon that year. But not long thereafter the tradition must have died, because I recall, or seem to, that at the 1971 worldcon in Boston, Harry Warner was the official Fan GoH and the British TAFF delegate was simply called upon to say a few words at the awards banquet. I may be wrong about this - maybe there was no British TAFF delegate that year (was that the year Bob Shaw came over on a special fund?). But certainly it isn't even slightly automatic anymore to make TAFF delegates Fan GoHs, and though I can understand why not - each concommittee likes to choose its own Fan GoH and advertise him/her in advance - I think it's a sad development symptomatic of the increasing schism between convention fandom and fanzine fandom, especially on this side. The fact that it's now common even Over There, where fannish fandom/ fanzine fandom has stayed homogenous much longer than here, depresses me.

Nowadays it seems that every local con in the States has its own Fan GoH, and considering the vast number of local cons we have, you can imagine how often I see someone listed as Fan GoH at a forthcoming con and have to wonder, "Who in the world is that?" People who've been active in local club politics for six months or a year turn up as Fan GoHs, and I can only shake my head in wonder.

I once had the opportunity to strike back at this tendency of US local cons, and was happy to do so. I was sitting in a hallway with Fred Pohl umpty years ago at some con and Fred said, "You know, I've won Hugos and Nebulas and been Pro Guest of Honour at more conventions than I can count, but what I'd really like to be is Fan Guest of Honour sometime. I think I have the credentials." Indeed he had: in his Futurian days Fred was a demon fanzine publisher and writer, and he'd done an astonishing amount of work for fanzines and conventions ever since.. I said, "If you're really serious maybe I can help to arrange it. How about V-Con in Vancouver, or Norwescon in Seattle next year?" He allowed as how those were two of his favourite cities anyhow, so in the months following I did a bit of lobbying for him, mainly by recounting this conversation to Susan Wood, who immediately realised how attractive a prospect it must be for any convention to have Fred Pohl in attendance as a GoH and be able to choose another big name pro as Pro GoH too. She passed on the word, and thus it came to pass that Fred Pohl was Fan GoH at Norwescon one year. I only wish I'd been able to attend the con myself, since I'm told Fred's Fan GoH talk, reminiscences about his days in fandom, was delightful.

I think current concommittees ought to bear in mind some of the pros-who-were-once-fans as candidates for the fan GoH position. It's certainly understandable that committees might be afraid of insulting a Big Name Pro by offering him/her a Fan GoH position, but for the most part I think that's needless: people who started in fandom almost always continue to see themselves as fans as well as pros even though their current activities are

necessarily confined to writing or editing or whatever, professionally, to support their families, and most of them would probably be delighted to have the chance to reaffirm their love for fandom and talk about The Old Days - and they'd give good talks, too. (I remember a con c. 10 years ago at which Harlan Ellison said on a panel that the pros ought to be honoured with money and perks, etc., because they were the most important people at cons, the ones most of the attendees came to see, and Lester del Rey stood up in the audience and said, " I came here because I'm a fan and I want to talk with fans.")

Has any concommittee offered a Fan GoHship to, say, Don Wollheim (founder of FAPA among many other things) or Damon Knight (who originally suggested the NFFF) or any of the other fan-cum-pros? On your side of the pond, has any committee ever asked, say, Mike Moorcock or John Brunner to be Fan Guests of Honour? They've both got the credentials in fandom.

((While I can think of a few British pros who were, or still are, active in fandom who might be amenable to the idea I don't think the two you've suggested would be, particularly Moorcock who doesn't deign to attend British SF conventions these days - nor has he for many years - and who was once observed to buy a copy of one of his old fanzines and then proceed to shred it with great relish.))

I see I've wandered a bit afield from my original subject of TAFF delegates being Fan GoHs...but not all that far afield. What I'm suggesting is that we stop handing these honours to clubfans and flashes-in-the-pan, and instead honour fans who are so outstanding that they can get support from both British and American fandom (TAFF delegates) and people who started as fans and have continued their allegiance to science fiction professionally when they might have made a lot more money writing other things. The question of just-what-is-a-fan hasn't been thought through very thoroughly by concommittees, it seems to me, and I think that's to the detriment of us all.

JOHN.D.OWEN

4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks MK16 9AZ.

First off, let me say that my reaction to your idea of the 'fannish foundation' last ish was hasty and ill-considered. The reason why I've changed my mind is that I've just received and read a fanthology of fifties material prepared by Eric Bentcliffe (WHEN YNGVI WAS A LOUSE) and I found myself enjoying the zine a great deal. Not everything in the collection was great, but it gave the flavour of the times and contained one gem in the form of a piece by John Berry which had me rolling about in laughter, recounting the antics of Willis, Shaw, White and co., on one obviously memorable evening. Now I'd like to see a similar fanthology of the sixties and seventies, to see how it all develops, stays the same, changes into something truly wonderful/awful, whatever. Following that line of thought, the occasional reprint in other zines is not such a bad idea or waste of space after all. I bow to your superior wisdom.

I should also like to apologise to Mr. White for 'over-reacting', a thing I am wont to do when imputations are made about things that aren't in

my mind or my writing, but which other people see. Your own demonstration with quotes from your own zine, and Joe Nicholas quotes from various sources make the point for me; I will not labour it.

I take it from your printing of TW's letter about the beats and their later Hippie offshoots, that you may conceivably be a fellow admirer of the Beat writers. Is this so? Noticing the resurgence of interest in Kerouac in particular over the last few years, I've been toying with the idea of doing an issue of CRYSTAL SHIP at least partially devoted to the Beats, with articles on Kerouac, Burroughs, et al. It's a long term project, still hovering round the back of my mind at the moment, though I'd be interested in hearing of anyone who might like to contribute to such an issue. Kerouac is my particular man - a tragic, comic, mixed-up, strung-out, wise and foolish bear of a writer that I've admired and read and re-read since the early sixties, when I discovered ON THE ROAD in my local library (curiously enough OTR is the one book of his I haven't got at the present moment, since my copy, along with the exceptionally fine Richard Farina book BEEN DOWN SO LONG IT LOOKS LIKE UP TO ME, was ripped off by a former 'friend' who I have not seen since he borrowed them ten years ago).

((I'm actually more into later writers like Wolfe and Thompson than I am into the early Beats - but then again I haven't read that much by them. I recently read ON THE ROAD and was not as impressed as I'd hoped to be, and over the years I've read a fair bit by William Burroughs. While not actually understanding a lot of Burroughs' writing I have been sufficiently intrigued to keep attempting his books (I got three-quarters of the way through his recent CITIES OF THE RED NIGHT before giving up, but I'll almost certainly tackle the book again at some future date).))

JAY KINNEY

3165A 16th St., San Francisco, CA 94103, USA.

EPSILON 12 was a good issue, with more than the usual amount of letters and art. I enjoyed both your cover collab with Harry Bell and your own strip, "Trufan and Junior". The latter struck a delightful balance between fannish and super-heroic cliché. Entertaining, fun, etc.,. Let's see more!

Just for the record I'll add to Ted White's noting of various fans who were also involved with the counterculture. Besides the cartoonists Ted mentioned, several others who had earlier published in fanzines moved on into the Underground press and comix: Ron Cobb did cartoons for L.A. area zines in the early 60s I believe; he of course went on to do several years of outstanding political cartoons for the L.A. FREE PRESS, and has recently been doing design and art for various SF movies (Alien, etc.). Jay Lynch, Art Spiegelman, Skip Williamson were all involved with Satire Fandom - a subfandom halfway between comics and SF fandom, which only lasted for a couple of years - in the early 60s, and forged contacts there which led to the networking of underground comix of '68 and later. Trina Robbins was involved with L.A. fandom in the 50s, did some art for fanzines then, and has since moved through the underground press and comix into various slick

magazines. Vaughn Bode took both fandom and undergrounds by storm about the same time and ended up with the Hugo for fan artist in 1969. Bhub Stewart, a fannish legend of sorts, was briefly editor of GOTHIC BLIMP WORKS - the N.Y. underground comic tabloid, had comic art in THE REALIST in the late 60s. So much for cartoonists (and I may still have forgotten one or two...)

A number of the founders of the first underground papers in the mid 60s cut their publishing teeth in fandom. Walter Bowart was a fan in the 50s (according to Jay Lynch) and went on to found The East Village Other in N.Y. Harvey Ovchinsky started The Fifth Estate (Detroit's underground paper) in 1965 after having done a fanzine called the TRANSYLVANIAN NEWSLETTER. Greg Shaw, whose article on Chester Anderson you refer to in this EPSILON, started the San Francisco/Bay Area rock magazine MOJO NAVIGATOR which, along with Paul Williams' CRAWDADDY, preceded ROLLING STONE, and founded rock journalism.

((Speaking of Shaw, Harry Bell (in MORE BEANS) quoted an article in a magazine called CREATIVE REVIEW that said: "West Coast record collector Greg Shaw, publisher of WHO PUT THE BOMP, is credited with coining the word fanzine for mags which were about single bands or branches of the rock family tree. Other less specific publications he called genzines." So much for those of us who'd always thought Louis Russel Chauvenet coined it when he started his FANZINE SERVICE FOR FANS IN SERVICE back in 1941, or thereabouts, eh wot? Actually it was only fairly recently that I became aware how the term came to be picked up by both rock and comics fandoms and for those similarly unaware, but interested, I present the following Dan Steffan quote from BOONFARK 7:

"It is interesting to consider, though, that our fandom did spawn all these other fanzine fandoms. Certainly people like Devra Langsam, Juanita Coulson and Ejo Trimble were instrumental in the creation of Star Trek fanzines. And Greg Shaw and Paul Williams spawned the Rock fanzines. And Ted White and Dick Lupoff were more or less responsible for the comic fanzine."))

Well, I could probably drag this on all night, but I'll stop there as fanhistory isn't my strongest suit (beyond a certain point I tend to forget names and dates). Suffice it to say that the network of fandom was one of several which made the counterculture possible. As to the ultimate significance of the counterculture? That's another subject I don't want to get into here - and probably couldn't draw many weighty conclusions anyway. Time will tell...

I'll be interested to hear your thoughts on artist collaborations when you formulate them. Much of my professional comic output has been collaboration, sometimes with me inking and sometimes with me pencilling - often both in the same strip. This has usually seemed to work best when the other artist and I can create a style between us which both of our individual idiosyncracies. Out of this a third style emerges, which is usually fascinating to watch. Unfortunately, it is a bit hard to place such hybrid styles into either of the participating artists' portfolios (so to speak) as many fans are unclear as to who did what. And when one works with collaborators where

half the fun is always creating new styles between us, that audience recognition factor drops even lower. Accordingly I suspect I've had a harder time developing a name for myself (in underground comics) than if I had stuck with one style and one set of characters. On the other hand, I've had more fun doing it the way I have - and, curiously, I think I've also been truer to myself.

MIKE GLICKSOHN

137 High Park Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6P 2S3.

You're an unusual editor in not being interested in unsolicited material but I guess that just shows how strongly you're in control of the direction the fanzine is taking. Since my only general circulation fanzines have been genzines, I was always happy to get an appropriate piece of material in the mail. Unfortunately it meant having to return three-quarters of the small number of items I did receive, but the few other items made up for that small amount of trouble.

((Actually I was quite surprised at the number of people who seemed to find my editorial policy strange since it's the policy I've always had - though never stated. As I see it the only way to get the things you want for your zine is to decide who's best able to produce what you want and then to approach them to see if they're interested in doing it. All the pieces by other writers that have appeared in EPSILON have been solicited and in every case I've told the writers what I want from them, none of this carte blanche stuff. Anyway, tho' there were many more good LoCs on EPSILON 12 than I've printed it's time to cut this column short and list the WAHFs...))

This is another reply to yet another EPSILON and you may WAHF it without causing me the slightest anxiety, just as long as it indicates to you that I've enjoyed what you've done and want to get the next issue. Us old and tired letterhacks really aren't too sensitive about getting published, y'know.

((But Michael, you have been published.....))

Your "give-him-enough-rope-and-he'll-hang-himself" number on Joseph is a work of sheer genius! And you may quote that line in the WAHFs if your ego needs inflating...

((B..but you're not in not in the WAHFs, Mike... 'cos here they come now..))

WAHF: Chris Atkinson with a letter she didn't want quoted but which did much for my ego; Harry J.N. Anruschak, Richard Bergeron, Rich Brown, who retracted comment made about Messrs. Bergeron and Ashley in an earlier LoC, and sent them copies; Anders Bellis, Dave Collins, Jim Darroch, Leigh Edmonds, Brad Foster, Jeanne Gomoll, Kathleen Glancy, Steve Green, Alun Harries, Terry Hill, Stu Shiffman, Jeff Suter, Martin Tudor, with a LoC on issue 9; Harry Warner Jr, Gloria McMillan, and Tim Marion. A number of new people sent requests for a copy of EPSILON including Peter Campbell who sent his request to Rob Hansen, 94 London Rd, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU, which is Dave Langford's address. What's going on? Time, I think, to do a strip....

TRUFAY & JUNIOR

STORY & ART :
ROB HANSEN

WHY DID YOU DRAG ME AWAY FROM THE GUEST OF HONOUR SPEECH, JUNIOR? IT WAS THE BEST PART OF THE CON, SO FAR....



...THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY I'VE HAD TO PLAY THE NEW STANLEY CLARKE ALBUM ON MY SONY WALKMAN.

I WANT TO GET INTO THE SFHW* HOSPITALITY SUITE, IF WE CAN.

WHAT ON EARTH FOR, FOR GODS SAKE?!

* SCI - FI HACKS OF THE WORLD.

TO MEET THE BIG-NAME AUTHORS, OF COURSE!! DON'T YOU EVER DREAM OF MEETING THEM?

NO, NOT REALLY. I HAVEN'T READ ANYTHING BY ANY OF THOSE GUYS IN YEARS. WHAT I DREAM OF IS GETTING VERY RICH, VERY QUICK, WITH VERY LITTLE EFFORT.



THERE'S THE SUITE NOW. I... HMMM. THERE'S A DUMDUM IRREDEEMABLE THERE TO KEEP THE RABBLE OUT. LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE OUT OF LUCK, KID. WAIT!! THE DOOR'S JUST OPENING... IF WE RUSH BY YOU'LL AT LEAST GET A LOOK INSIDE.



UH... MAYBE YOU WERE RIGHT AFTER ALL AND WE OUGHT TO GO IN THERE AND BE... ER... HOSPITABLE.

WHY THE SMIRK, JUNIOR?

OH NOTHING... NOTHING AT ALL.

GOOD. NOW IF WE'RE GONNA GET PAST EINSTEIN JR. I NEED SOME STUFF FROM THE FAN ROOM...



SOON...

WHAT DO YOU TWO WANT?

BERTRAM B. BONG ASKED US TO MEET HIM HERE... OR SHOULD I SAY THREEEBIE, AS HE LIKES HIS FRIENDS TO CALL HIM.

OR EVEN THREEB, SOMETIMES.

SHH!!



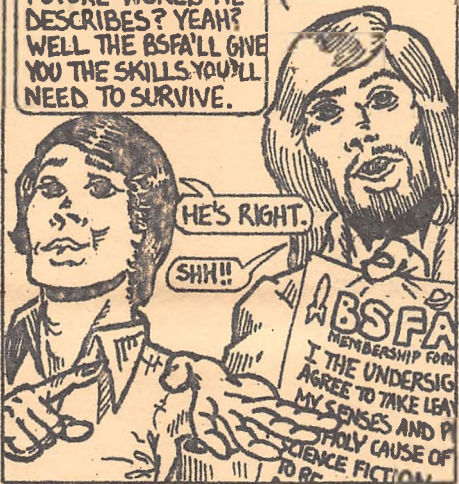
SAY... YOU LOOK LIKE A PRETTY AWARE SORT OF GUY - HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED ENROLLING IN THE BSFA?

BSFA?

YEAH... THE BRITISH STREET FIGHTING ACADEMY. YOU MUST HAVE READ ROCK HELLMAN'S "PERIL OF THE PINKO PLANET" AND SEEN HOW INEVITABLE IS THE FUTURE WORLD HE DESCRIBES? YEAH? WELL THE BSFA'LL GIVE YOU THE SKILLS YOU'LL NEED TO SURVIVE.

HE'S RIGHT.

SHH!!



SO ANYWAY, WE CAN GO IN AND SEE GOOD OL' THREEB, CAN WE?

HMMN?

THANKS!



HEY! WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THE STUFF THAT WAS GOING ON TEN MINUTES AGO?

OH THAT WAS JUST THE PRELIMINARIES TO THE EVENING'S MAIN ENTERTAINMENT.

PRELIMINARIES?

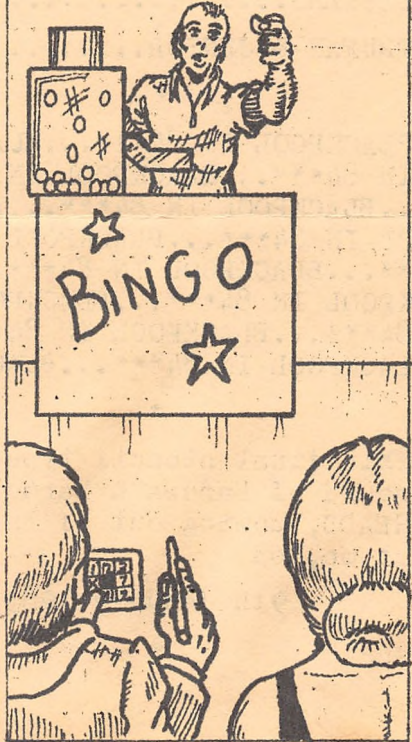
YES. CAN I GET YOU A DRINK?



CHEERS! IT'S BEEN A GOOD QUARTER HOUR SINCE MY LAST DRINK AND... OH NO! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!! THAT CAN'T BE WHAT YOU GET UP TO IN HERE!!!



THREE AND FOUR - THIRTY FOUR ALL ALONE - IT'S NUMBER ONE....



EPSILON 13.....January 1983.

comes to you on an approximat-
ely quarterly schedule from...

Rob Hansen
9A Greenleaf Rd.
East Ham
London E6 1DX.

and is available for letter of
comment, trade, or by editorial
whim.

Cover this time is by Rob Hansen
with gremlins by Harry Bell. It
shows the editor at work on
an issue in typical fashion and
also explains how all those
typos get there.

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*

This final stencil typed to the
sound of Barnes & Barnes' FISH
HEADS, coming out of the radio
at me, on

9th January 1983.