



EPSILON15

¡VIVA AZTLÁN!

MEXICON -  
¡LA CONVENCIÓN!  
25-28 MAY  
1984  
— BE THERE!!

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HANSEN WAS HERE '83...

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\*\*\*STRANGER THAN THE ILLUMINATI...HOTTER THAN WATERGATE.....IT'S.\*\*\*

THE SECRET OF THE GWERIN  
THE SECRET OF THE GWERIN.....revealed at last!  
THE SECRET OF THE GWERIN

We were at NOVACON 13 and it was Sunday. I checked my watch, smiled at the sight of John Jarrold vainly trying to suck his Coca Cola up through a straw, and left the bar. Elsewhere Chris Evans removed the bottle-caps from his eyes and rose to his feet, while Dave Langford excused himself from the group of glassy-eyed Surrey Limpwristes suffering a Joseph Nicholas sermon ("...the Thatcherite junta....capitalist-imperialist running-dog lackeys... manifest destiny of the proletariat...") by feigning hearing-aid malfunction, sighing with relief as he made the corridor beyond the lounge. In a corner of the bar Kevin Williams ceased berating Harry Bell about his procrastination and general bone-idleness when it came to doing his bit for OUT OF THE BLUE and, leaving his jovial co-editor beaming beatifically at anyone who looked as if they might buy him a drink, made his way across the bar and out through the lounge area. It was time. All over the convention certain people were heeding the call and slipping away from those they were with as quietly as they could, because a weak bladder is pretty embarrassing after all, but another group was also on the move. One by one they made their way to a particular hotel room, rapped out a complex signal on the door, and were admitted. The Gwerin were gathering.

As the others arrived and the room filled I marvelled again at the whole concept of the Gwerin, at this secret brotherhood of Welsh fans whose existence as an organised body went unsuspected by the rest of British fandom. It was amazing to think that our Order controlled the destiny of fandom in this country, particularly as many of our members gave every appearance of being total piss-artists, but that we did was indisputable.

The origins of the Gwerin have been lost to time, posterity, and far too many alcohol-pickled brain cells, but some of its earliest machinations are known to have been set in motion as far back as the early 70s. It's difficult, here in the 80s, to unravel the web of intrigue that reaches across the years from those dim and distant days to the present but from the mid-70s onwards the trail becomes clearer....

With the premier British newzine of the day, CHECKPOINT, firmly in the carrot-stained grip of arch Cornish nationalist Peter Roberts and the BSFA, as ever, of little real consequence to general fandom and thus a red herring, it looked as if there was no easy way to take control of the channels for disseminating information and influencing opinion that are the key to power over fandom, but in 1976 an opportunity presented itself... Inspired by the idea, if not the reality, of FAANCON - a small and informal convention for fanzine fans launched early that year - a similar convention was proposed, but one guaranteed to attract the leading fanzine editors of the day and to become one of the main "smoke-filled rooms" of British fandom, a comfortable gathering where the burning fannish issues of the day would be debated and the real decisions made. Since the Newcastle-based Gannets, the North East's premier fan group, had generated so much good karma with the Eastercon they hosted two years earlier they were picked as the ideal people to host this new con

and the Gwerin agent in the group, our Welsh mole, was assigned the task. Deftly, with a few words in an ear here and an offhand suggestion there, he succeeded in planting the idea in the minds of the other Gannets until it took firm root. So it was that SILICON was born.

From its very inception it became Britain's leading convention for fanzine fans, a place where convention bids, TAFF candidacies, and new APAs were born; a place where old disputes were resolved and new ones created, new reputations made and old ones destroyed. And through it all the Gwerin stalked, influencing opinion and setting in motion schemes whose final resolution could lay years in the future and whose ultimate effects might be felt not only in Britain but across the whole English-speaking fannish world.

Around the same time Dave Langford was chosen to step in when Roberts eventually folded CHECKPOINT and to that end was instructed to start a fanzine in which he could hone and develop those particular skills so essential to the success of a newzine, and which he would be allowed to gradually run down after the newzine took off. So it was that TWLL DDU was born.

In the period that followed Langford rose through the fanwriting ranks and also performed a vital service for the Gwerin when he convinced Kevin Smith to aid him in sabotaging ANOTHER BLOODY FANZINE, a proposed Nicholas/Dorey zine which would have been a loose cannon on the deck of British fandom and as such a disruptive "X-factor" whose unknowable future effects demanded its elimination.

When he finally pulled the plug on CHECKPOINT Roberts announced, in jest: LANGFORD KOs CHECKPOINT IN GRIM FAN STRUGGLE. Ah, if he'd only known! So it was that ANSIBLE was born.

After the Brighton Worldcon in 1979, with the predicted deleterious effect it had on the fanzine output of those active before the convention, the current Grand Master of our Order realised the need for a unified plan that built on our gains up til then and extended our influence. Thus, after putting out a final issue of his famous 1970s fanzine ("purely to keep my hand in"), he announced that he was leaving fandom and his 'gafiation' was duly reported in ANSIBLE. Little did anyone realise this was a mere ploy, a subterfuge designed to divert attention from him and so give him time to plot the strategy of the Gwerin over the next few years. Though he gave every appearance of doing nothing more than watching TV, listening to records, and playing with the cats he was actually formulating The Plan. Shortly before his 'gafiation', however, he performed one last task.....

In order to create an image of Welshfandom that would divert attention from the increased activity of the Gwerin in the coming months, the Grand Master instructed Newport agents Alun Harries and Dai Price to infiltrate the SF group in neighbouring Cardiff, a highly unusual group whose activities appeared to centre on the works of Lionel R. Fanthorpe. They only attended a few meetings but this was enough to plant the idea of a convention run by the group and in no time at all CYMRUCON was born. As anticipated this con was a little...ah...unusual, and after checking out this years CYMRUCON our Grand Master returned pale and shaken....

"The place was full of people running around with water pistols or wrestling on the floor, and one of those rolling around on the carpet

and really getting into all this was Dez Skinn and I thought: "My god, is this the editor of WARRIOR, the saviour of British comics?!!"

One of the first things done by the Grand Master during his 'gafiation' was encouraging his wife in her desire to set up an APA and, after studying the result, realising that an APA with the right cross-section of fandom represented in its ranks would constitute yet another "smoke-filled room" where opinion could be moulded and the influence of the Gwerin increased. Once again our agent in the North East was assigned the job of generating support for the idea within Gannetfandom. By the time the 1983 SILICON came around Harry Bell and Mike Hamilton were pushing hard for the formation of such an APA and were doubtless convinced it was all their own idea, the poor deluded fools. In a performance worthy of an Oscar the Grand Master 'very reluctantly' accepted the position of APA administrator....and FRANK'S APA became another tool in the hands of the Gwerin. The final part of the current phase of The Plan concerns the Eastercon...

For many years now fans have been moaning about the way the Eastercon has grown to encompass a whole variety of people interested more in costumes, or role-playing games, or media "sci-fi", or whatever, than in written SF and though this process was probably inevitable many still pined for Eastercon as it used to be - a convention put on by people whose main interest lay in SF and in fanzines, for others who felt the same way. This being so it was almost certain that, while the Eastercon would undoubtedly continue much as it has in recent years, there would be increasing calls for another convention to be established that catered to the needs of these SF fans in a way that the multi-media Eastercon no longer did. And this being so control over that convention became very desirable. Yet again our man in the North East was given the task, and shortly after the bidding session at this year's Eastercon he made a speech on behalf of TYNECON '85, which would be "...an Eastercon as they used to be." Though the rest of the Gannets didn't know it this was, of course, a red herring since the media-oriented section of the audience at a bidding session now form an overwhelming lobby and the time when such a convention could succeed in getting an Eastercon nomination is long past. No, this speech was merely designed to prepare people and soften them up for the real convention, to be held in 1984, MEXICON. Under the impression they were forming the committee of the 1985 Eastercon the Gannets were recruited by MEXICON and became the Newcastle end of the operation. With publications (ie: propaganda) in the hands of a member of our Order, the Grand Master in charge of the southern group, and our agent in Newcastle being both the leader of the team that end and convention chairman, MEXICON is firmly in the grip of the Gwerin.

At NOVACON 13, as those ceremonies based on the arcane rituals of our Celtic ancestors came to an end, I approached the Grand Master with the idea of revealing all that you have just read. He thought about this for a few minutes and then smiled.

"Yeah, why not", he said. "After all, no-one will believe a word of it."

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\*\*\*TO BOLDLY GO WHERE FEW FANS HAVEN'T BEEN BEFORE...IT'S 'THE NOSE' VERSUS...\*\*

THE NERDS OF NOVEMBER

THE NERDS OF NOVEMBER.....the latest offering from our

THE NERDS OF NOVEMBER occasional columnist..LEROY KETTLE.

Brosnan was feeling insecure. He'd just received advance copies of his latest sex 'n' plagiarism thriller, THE MIDAS DEEP, and was moaning about the cover. Apart from the fact that it was impossible to read his name because the blue background was the same as the blue 'Brosnan' and he'd had to draw round where the letters should have been with a biro, the book was described as "an underwater hell of seething catastrophe". What with John seething, the cover a catastrophe, and various mutterings about his publishers deserving an underwater hell it probably wasn't too bad a line, though it did seem to lack something - appeal, meaning, validity, a verb. What it had in its favour was a rich red colour that stood out, and things might have been OK if John had written under the pseudonym A.Nunderwaterhellofseethingcatastrophe. But even more interesting than the blunder on the cover was a line I'd just noticed in the book itself: "Then, just as he was rounding the corner of one of the big cylindrical tanks..." And only on the second page, too.

Amazingly, and despite all this, John's literary insecurity soon passed. By the time we reached Coventry, on our way to Birmingham and NOVACON 13, he'd stopped saying: "But I can't draw round my name on all 350 copies!", and was worrying about his Persil voucher again. He was sure that the voucher - which looked as much like a rail ticket as Roz Kaveney does a shrinking violet - wouldn't actually work. He knew that, at the very least, he'd have to have some proof that he himself used Persil.

"Just show them your hair", I said helpfully.

"Poct", replied Australia's greatest wit.

From New Street Station, which looks more like a failed Swedish prison every year, we followed the Brosnan route to the Royal Angus. This is similar to the Hansen route except you get to see the other half of Birmingham. Arriving at the hotel from a direction that probably doesn't exist, we were told that our overflow hotel was in fact virtually opposite the station. Numerous people laughed at our distress. I don't recall us being among them. Having to hump our bags back to New Street was bad enough, but then we found that our hotel was having a moat built around it and that the bar was stocked for a Salvation Army conference. On top of that I discovered that Hansen had grabbed the best bed in our twin room. I got my own back by sitting on his new Superman comics and farting.

We arrived back at the Royal Angus just in time to catch Garry Wobb's verbal equivalent of a pre-frontal lobotomy as he got out his tatty old Eagle Comics yet again and shifted his mouth into hyperdrive. Ironically Jack Cohen, one of the few people who can stun the brain cells faster than Garry, was on next and I spent a good part of the evening phoning for ambulances. The embarrassing thing, of course, was having to explain that for most fans brain-death is an improvement.

Later that evening I missed two things. The first was Ian Sorenson's 'rock opera' "Ego", which Rob Hansen described as the musical equivalent of

a Garry Wobb lecture, but boring. He said that Sorenson had the musical ability of a rather over-cooked brussel sprout but was taller. Sometimes I find Hansen's analogies hard to grasp. I also missed out on the Brum group party because I was having fun with people.

Hotel breakfasts are entertaining occasions for me. So long as the food is anything like edible - which has been known - then I'm quite happy sitting around for an hour or so stuffing one form of cholesterol or another into whichever orifice my fork is nearest. Unfortunately I'm also usually still drunk from the excesses of the previous night and this, combined with lack of sleep and a completely atypical need to over-compensate for everything imaginable, makes me talk more nonsense than usual, more loudly, and with wilder and messier gestures. Paul Kincaid and Rob Hansen were trying desperately to concentrate on the task of finding the pink bits on their plates that allowed the hotel the option of labelling the fat as bacon and to catch the tomatoes that looked strangely like Brosnan's eyeballs only not so red. I kept interrupting them and prattled on and on until I could hear Paul muttering: "Why did I sit hear, why, why?", as he scraped in vain at the durex-like skin of his sausage. And if a durex is adequate protection against Rob Holdstock's mighty emissions then a mere hotel-knife won't have much effect. Meanwhile I bumbled away, pausing only to let Rob Hansen say (if memory serves better than the hotel waitresses): "Fwaw, look at that!", every time a woman or a fairly pretty boy walked in, and for Brosnan to mumble something about needing pain-killers and how publishers were a pain. Then a rather fat and undesirable Scottish litigant walked in, sat next to us, and began being himself. He succeeded in doing what even I couldn't and everyone left hurriedly.

By then I'd remembered the direct route from our hotel to the Royal Angus and we were soon fighting our way to the world's smallest bar, which will serve eight normal people, or three Brum group members, or one Piers Anthony fan with his life support system. Brosnan looked round desperately for someone who would buy him a drink - "just until my royalty cheque comes in, honest, sport" - and as usual it was me who fed his pitiful habit.

"A small Scotch; no, make that a large Scotch; no, make that two large Scotches and a lager", he said, fearful that he wouldn't find another sucker for the next two minutes.

At the first hint of someone buying drink it was as if they were serving Magnet Ales. Rob Holdstock rushed up and poured a full pint onto the floor in his desperation to have his glass filled for free. Harry Bell appeared so quickly that there was a small implosion of air where he'd been sitting - unless it was Rob Hansen practising redolence again. And there was John Jarrold standing next to me, tongue akimbo, when only five minutes before he'd been scraping dog turds off his Hush Puppies in West Wickham. Of the regular greed-buckets only the Chief Druid of Bingley failed to appear. Still, it's the only way I can get people to talk to me so I don't mind really. And anyway, I keep count.

I went back into the con-hall where an out-of-uniform Action Man working on too many Duracell batteries was telling an audience containing an increasingly high percentage of males that men write the best feminist sci-fi. Eventually one of the few women left in the audience shouted: "What about John

Norman, then?" As Tom Shippey hadn't heard of John Norman a lot of sting was taken out of what would otherwise have been a pretty effective put down, but the rest of the audience lapped it up and rattled their chains. Mrs Joseph Nicholas was visibly upset by Shippey's suggestion that John Wyndham could write better than feminist authoresses like Shirley Conran and Jackie Collins and was heard to mutter that baldness is caused by the hair roots coming loose from the brain as it shrinks. I hadn't known that.

In the bookroom I made a few purchases from Andromeda using cheques that should be coming back home just about now. I bought a copy of Malcolm Edwards' and Maxim Jabberwocky's Book of Mike Ashley's SF Lists, as favourably reviewed in the Sunday Times. I was disappointed that the lists Malcolm had previously shown me were not in: Great Space Fucks, Bergey Covers I Have Abused, and My Favourite Scenes From 'The Gas'. But then when you're a Daddy you have to set an example so the book's full of lists of Thirteen Triffic Post-Natal Exercises For Spacemen, and Nappies I Would Rather Not Have Changed. I also bought, on the recommendation of Chris Evans and Rog Peyton (who's honest enough to recommend anything on which your eye alights for more than a microsecond), THE LAND OF LAUGHS by Johnathan Carroll. When I mentioned it to Malcolm he groaned. "Not the bloody Land of Sodding Laughs", he said. "If I meet one more person who talks to me about The Land Of Laughs I'm gonna puke!" Immediately Chris Evans mentioned it and Malcolm threw up over Brian Ameringen's head but it was over a week before he noticed. However, Malcolm cheered up when I mentioned that I'd bought a copy of his book and he even went so far as to buy a copy of SIMLER (so-called because of the many other books and films it closely resembles). He even asked its two famous authors to sign it; just the first of many such requests that weekend. I could get to like this fame business if only money came with it, but Brosnan's still drinking away my royalties. Those particular copies of SLIMER (as favourably reviewed in The Times and Time Out) were specially endorsed by Brosnan, following a small fracas with the woman to whom he had dedicated the masterpiece. Her name was deleted and the more endearing dedication "Bitch!" was scrawled inside. I must remember to tell her next time I see her.

After a few more drinks, a mingle or two, and a cheapo hotel pie - the gastronomic equivalent of the invasion of Grenada - I sought the solace of another programme item, one on which Rob Holdstock, Chris Evans, and the guestess of honour Lisa Tuttle put off all aspiring writers in the audience for ever with tales of economic and creative distress so terrible to hear that it was clear all three must be artists. Rob pointed out that in order to write he had to spend more on Burgandy than he could earn as a writer. Chris couldn't work for the "bloody Priests at it all the time downstairs" (thought to be a reference to the busy writers in the flat below) and Lisa couldn't work for that "bloody Chris Evans sitting upstairs listening". Having myself written several of the sentences in SLIMER I think that I can safely say that I know about art and what causes me greatest difficulty is that they don't put enough Snopake in a bottle to correct more than a page.

Foolishly, I'd agreed to appear on an emaciated version of The Krypton Factor. I couldn't hear a lot of the questions because Langford's hearing aid was making a noise like a Sherman tank on one side and I didn't get a chance to answer most of the others because John Jarrold, the man with the world's most trivial brain, began answering furiously when he realised the prize was a

bottle of whisky. I regretted helping them both with the early questions and I particularly regretted acting as a focus for the psychic energy from the late D. West so that, in the astral pole section of the game, they could get their legs round the pole without sticking it three feet up their bums. Still, it was fun and I got a free pint out of it. That's what life's all about really, isn't it?

That evening the hotel served pizza. Now, at previous conventions I've enjoyed the Angus' quickie meals; they're a practical idea, they're cheap, and they taste as good as most convenience foods. But this year they weren't generally finger lickin' good. The pizza was like the top of a tub of margarine liberally spread with the vomit of an extremely ill beagle. The chips were soggy and hung in my stomach like an analogy I'm keeping for SON OF SLIMER. Then again, I have eaten worse things at conventions. Christ, I've had conversations with worse things at conventions!

Occasionally someone on a convention committee comes up with an idea so appalling that it will actually end up happening because everyone assumes it to be a joke until that awful moment when the programme book arrives. Then the committee members look at each other in horror and no-one will confess to being the culprit. John Wilkes shrugs his manly shoulders. Jan Huxley glances away, pale with shock. Chris Huge whistles nervously. Yes it happened this year, and it was the barndance...

Johns Jarrold and Brosnan leaned back against the strangely uncrowded bar in the main hall while I bought them drinks. On the dance floor, where Rog Peyton's demented rocking was now only a memory, fourteen desperate idiots (most of them committee members, 'nuff said) pranced around looking like they must know what they looked like. Grab your partner, dozey doe, they muttered to each other, eyes glazed with embarrassment. Chris Evans and Faith Brooker walked in and we smiled knowingly at each other, an island of common sense in a sea of bounding stupidity, until Faith, giving in to some primal female urge, grabbed a passing partner and began to dozey doe. Chris muttered, "She's not with me, boss" and we clubbed together to buy him a half of lager. He shook his head. "She was normal only a few minutes ago." We all shook our heads in sympathy. John Jarrold reckoned it was actually the pizza and they were just trying to get their bowels moving again.

Later there were two parties. One was triffic, well-attended, and had some nice jug-dancing. This was given by the tequila-sodden MEXICON committee, all totally incapable of remembering whether you sucked the salt before you licked the lemon but pretty damn certain that if you dropped a lemon you threw it over your shoulder to avoid bad luck. The other party was given by John Brunner and was attended by John Brunner. That is except when he was in the MEXICON party asking people who had more sense if they would like to go to his room. Even Peter Weston stayed at the MEXICON party. What with Eileen having spent the day with her head in a bucket of henna and Peter espousing Socialism to the extent that he wanted everyone richer than him to share their wealth with the Westons, it's surprising that the party wasn't invaded by American forces. Joseph Nicholas was there representing Radical Transvestites Against Style, Dave Bridges supporting Hippies Against Reality, and Phil Palmer requesting help against Ted White. When we left, in convoy through the streets of Birmingham at three o'clock in the morning, the party was still going strong.



Rob Holdstock was so overcome with tequila and what he likes to call vibes that when this immense black guy, with more muscles in one bogey than I've got under my skin, walked past, Rob shouted out: "Look, he's got natural rhythm! Hey, can you do that darky jive-talk, man?", until several fannish hands clamped over his mouth before one big black fist could have him chewing his food half-way down his lower intestine. Drink and dance do strange things to some people. I was reminded forceably of this half an hour later when Hansen returned and announced his presence with a particularly loud raspberry...but that's another con report.

After missing breakfast I wasn't in much of a mood for anything other than consoling myself with several lagers but I went to hear Lisa Tuttle's Guest of Honour speech anyway. As I might have expected it was so spot-on that I rushed out to the bookroom afterwards and bought the only two of her paperback SF and fantasy novels that I didn't already possess. Jesus, I was so impressed I even tried to buy a George Martin book that I already had! After Lisa there was a guy called Terrence Dicks who I was going to listen to until someone told me it was his name not his habit, so instead I invested my money wisely in the brewing industry. Later I was still sober enough to enjoy a panel which rightly slagged off Kingsley Amis for being a wally. Malcolm Edwards, who since the panel has made Chris Atkinson take the furry dice out of their car window, did a good PR job on the famous Gollancz author, although strangely I didn't rush out and buy any of his books. Then, when the audience was asked to name other categories of wally, Andrew Stephenson had the audacity, for someone with a CB radio, to offer suggestions. I also particularly liked Rog Peyton's hilarious anecdote about Larry Niven, but I won't spoil it for you by repeating it here.

I then began making a serious effort to achieve extreme inebriation. Despite this I remember Andrew Stephenson sending back a bottle of wine during dinner and suggesting in all seriousness that it was so bad it would do for the staff; Steve Higgins making Rob Hansen look like a ballroom dancer with elephantiasis; Brosnan convincing Rochelle Dorey that he had been a gynecologist back in Australia; Chris Evans, Rob Holdstock, Faith Brooker, and others who should have known better listing their all-time favourite bogies; Malcolm going around very smugly telling everyone that he'd got over 500,000 on the pinball machine, but not mentioning that it had taken him as many 10p pieces to achieve; Linda, Lilian Edwards, and Simon Ounsley definitely not looking like two octopusses scratching each others backs, oh no; me talking to Greg for a longer time than seems at all probable; and Rob Hansen lying in bed when I arrived back at about seven o'clock, naked torso shining like a glazed maggot, shouting in his sleep: "Treat it gently...it's never had company before."

The next day we all sat around, the tough men sipping orange juices and Faith drinking gin and lager alternately. We talked about life and art and Faith told us how she'd met Martin Hoare when he was playing Moby Dick in the local rep. So I told them the funniest story I knew about an artist which concerned this guy, whose name I couldn't recall at that stage of the weekend, who'd written a line in his latest book about someone going around the corner of a cylindrical building. Everyone laughed. Suddenly, a blue-covered book hurtled through the air and bounced off my head. "The cylinder was lying on its side!" shouted Brosnan. "Oh.", I said. Then I woke up. It had all been a dream.

.....LEROY KETTLE.

\*\*\*.....YEP, IT'S THAT CUT N'THRUST COLUMN OF CONTENTION AND CUTENESS...\*\*\*

LETTERS  
LETTERS.....let's hear it for that great musical sage.....  
LETTERS

DEAF LEMON ASTRAL

45 Kimberley Gdns., Harringey, London N4.

You lucky blighter. You have been chosen from our computer listing of thousands to be the very first to receive the new Deaf Lemon Astral cassette, at present without a snappy cassette-liner which a certain famous artist not a million miles removed from Greenleaf Road has promised to execute, pronto. This will be in glorious black and white and will bear the legend THE DEAF LEMON ASTRAL MEMORIAL ALBUM along with any additional emblems, cartouches, logos and little icky bits he feels inclined to interpose. This artwork will be returned to me probably in three months time to enable me to print up liners for general distribution. For this kindness said artist will be paid nothing, sweet f.a., nary a bean, zilcho, etc.

PS. Nice fanzine, EPSILON. Haven't read it yet.

((I just don't get no respect. Hey, nice album Deaf, ol'buddy, particularly the track about Big Kev Smith. Far out, man. And by the time you read this I should have got the liner to you - in fact if that last line is anything to go by I'll also have those for the fourth, fifth and sixth Astral albums to you....))

MIKE GLICKSOHN

508 Windermere Ave., Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M6S 3L6.

ETA was fun to read but calls forth little in the way of comment. Since Malcolm also handed me a small bundle of DTs in the midst of the madness of Baltimore (we actually got to see each other and have brief chats on quite a few occasions, most ly because we both went back to the Fan Room frequently - I'm sure he's described "the con suite" to you in gruesome detail...), yours was the second account of the unfortunate fate of John Brosnan that I'd read. (Yes, it's true: I read Malcolm Edwards' ensmallled fanzines before I read yours. However, upon receipt of large amounts of cash I promise to reverse this order and then take out an ad in LOCUS - the world's best fanzine - to brag about it. Money should be sent to my N\*E\*W address.) Amusing as Leroy's piece was and droll as your own comments were I can't help feeling that this is not all that funny an incident: frankly it worries the shit out of me that our society is degenerating into one in which (relatively) innocent bystanders can become the victims of senseless and apparently very brutal violence. If I were a London fan I'd be very concerned about what happened to John and about the possibility of it happening to me.

((Ever hear the line that goes 'if you didn't laugh you'd cry'? Unfortunately, Mike, it's not just London - or only large cities even - and I give thanks to whatever gods there be that we're not allowed to carry guns over here or the streets would be even more unsafe. Which is not to say there's no chance of you being killed, of course.

Only two weeks ago (as I write) Newport fan Alun Harries was beaten up less than a quarter of a mile from where I used to live, in circumstances remarkably similar to those Brosnan got involved in. And if a patrolling police car hadn't happened along he would have been kicked in the face some more and could have been hurt a lot worse. As it was he received a broken nose and lost teeth and spent a week in hospital. He's currently undergoing fairly extensive dental treatment to correct the damage done to his teeth and may have to have an operation on his nose to repair crushed tissue. Although now looking no more gruesome than usual the first time he was allowed to look in a mirror, through the only eye he could then see with, he didn't recognise the face that stared back at him.

So yeah, it's tough out there Mike, and I think most of us have long realised that if you walk the streets after dark you're a player in a game of chance. But with Harries getting it so soon after Brosnan it looks like the odds may be a lot shorter than we might like to pretend.))

I'm glad I read all of EPSILON 14 through before commenting on it as otherwise I'd have mentioned the obvious Eisner influence on the cover only to find you admitting it on the back page. If you're going to pay homage to any comic artist, Eisner is a perfect choice. I used to be an avid comic book collector and had practically all the Marvel comics from Fantastic Four 1 through to the summer of 1973. At that time I realised that a) I could no longer afford to keep up with the proliferating number of Marvel titles and b) I was buying less from interest than from the accumulated momentum of ten years of consecutive issues. So I stopped buying comics. Except for Eisner. For the last ten years I've bought every issue of The Spirit and most of the various collections of Eisner's work that have appeared. He's certainly one of the top two or three comic artists of all time and the EPSILON cover manages to capture the style of the Eisner splash-panel to perfection. I'm assuming that Dan pencilled it and you inked it?

((Wrong. I did the pencils and Dan the inking. What probably confused you was the Dan Steffan figure in the picture which he chose to use instead of the more brooding and windswept figure I'd sketched. No, when we first thought of collaborating I tried to imagine what Dan's inks would look like over my pencils and decided the end result would be vaguely Eisnerish. I mentioned this to Dan, sent him my loose (man, were they loose) pencils done with this in mind, and he picked up the idea and ran with it. Magnificently. Take a bow, Mr.Steffan.))

You're completely right about the inability of many fans to correctly interpret what they read (or even to avoid splitting infinitives) but I doubt the accuracy of your guess at the reason for the phenomenon. The sort of person who skims a fanzine and picks out a few key phrases doesn't strike me as the sort of person who'll take the time or have the interest to sit down and write a lengthy LoC on the issue. I'd say the inability of fans to understand what they read is merely another proof of what I've been saying for years, namely that most fans are as far from being slans as you're average avocado. (Which at least has the saving grace of being the world's most nutritious fruit, as all you're readers into "Trivial Pursuit" will know. "Trivial Pursuit", of course, joins basketball as Canada's great contribution to gamesmanship: and if you

haven't heard of it, don't worry. You will!) Nothing that demonstrates the stupidity of fans in general ever surprises me. Depresses me, maybe, but doesn't surprise me.

I enjoyed the second of your two conreports more than the first but the first gave a graphic demonstration of why I have very little to do with running conventions nowadays. When even a mild-mannered essentially nice guy like yourself has to (humourously or not) think about the dirty tactics that might help win a bid, I don't want anything to do with it. And unfortunately, North American con-bidding has far too much of that sort of thing, as any reader of FILE 770 knows far too well.

Among the things I'll be moving to my new address in four more days will be twenty five quite large and quite heavy boxes of fanzines. Maybe Darroll Pardoe has a point after all....

#### DARROLL PARDOE

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I'm sorry to have so shocked Mike and Peter with my statement that I don't preserve intact the fanzines that I receive. But what I do with them is not so much destroy as dismember. I do keep the bits that I think I'm going to want to re-read (a choice made on intrinsic merit, not possible historical importance) and then throw away the mutilated remains, if any. Were I to give away whole fanzines I'd be denying myself the benefit of several box-files' worth of fanzine clippings. Sometimes I DO save a whole fanzine, but not often.

Terry Carr's attitude to fandom is one I find incomprehensible as he appears to find mine. Is fandom, then, a thing to be studied rather than a social milieu to be enjoyed? It can be studied, certainly, in the way that a historian or a sociologist might, but that is a separate operation having nothing to do with the on-going participation in fandom that interests me.

I wax nostalgic now and then, of course, over aspects of fandom past as it happened to me - but that's got little in common with the antiquarian raking over of dead years and the collection of old fanzines just because they're old fanzines. I prefer to be out there creating or responding to NEW fanzines or just socialising with my friends in fandom.

Let others search for the elusive copies of two-year old fanzines to which Mike refers. Why should I feel an obligation to help them in their task?

#### TERRY CARR

11307 Broadway Tce., Oakland, California 94611, USA.

No, of course one doesn't throw away old fanzines, no matter how dreadful they may be. Remember that their circulations are reckoned in the hundreds at best, so it isn't at all like stamps or whatever. Bradbury's fanzines were crudzines, but they fetch literally hundreds of dollars on the market today; the same is true of Ellison oneshots. It's also true of THURBAN I 3...now, THURBAN I was one of the worst fanzines ever published, but its third-and-last issue did feature a story by Roger Zelazny, probably his first appearance in print. Too bad for those fans who threw the fanzine away; but as Ben

Singer realised, the more copies burned, the higher the prices for the copies remaining (which is why Singer burned so many of his fanzines).

I know what you mean about feeling that "...each fanzine should have its own distinct character and that no article, no matter how good, that is out of character should appear in that fanzine." In the case of EPSILON, that character is purely fannish, as you describe it, and in this sense of being carefully delimited to fannishness it reminds me of my own INNUENDO, which had a very similar editorial policy. INN ran for five years, eleven issues some of which were pretty big (60 or 90 pgs), and I don't recall a single item in it that didn't revolve around or spring from some trufannish subject. I was doing plenty of other fanac at the time, and channelled my writing and publishing on other subjects into onther fanzines, leaving INN as a kind of distillation of my purely fannish efforts. In that, I think, lay its strength, but also the seed of its demise, because eventually I became sufficiently interested in enough other things (even SF) to make a different fanzine necessary; hence INN folded and I published LIGHTHOUSE instead. LTHS had alot of fannish stuff, but also material on SF and classical music, travel reports, Western fiction and fact, drugs, etc., etc, - whatever I and my contributors wanted to talk about in fact. I think in retrospect that LIGHTHOUSE was the better fanzine, but mainly just because I was more experienced when I published it. And I do think that LTHS, despite its eclectic nature, displayed as individual a personality as INN; if anything, it had more personality, because it showed a wider and truer range of my interests.

It may come to pass that sometime in the future you'll want to publish a fanzine with broader parameters, but for the moment and the foreseeable future I enjoy EPSILON as it is, pure fannishness personified.

Perhaps oddly, never in INN's history did I publish fanzine reviews or feel the need to do so. Mainly I suppose this was because INN's publication schedule was too infrequent to present such reviews as contemporary pieces... but I think, too, that fanzine reviews in them thar days were rather crude and wouldn't stand the test of time. Some years later I got into fanzine reviewing myself, working in some depth, and more recent reviewers have developed the form into a mode of art, sort of. Your own reviews this issue are a case in point. NOTIONS has always been a column about trends in fandom, with examples; in this fanzine-review installment, you seem simply to have reversed the order of priority, working this time from the particular to the general. I find it kind of amusing that one of the trends you spot in Britfandom is a "shift towards a more personal and revelatory mode of fan-writing", because I remember a couple of years ago various fans on your side of the pond sneering constantly at this kind of writing in American fanzines: "lachrymose maunderings, undescended testicles worn on sleeves, " etc. Of course, a lot of the American stuff was pretty wet, and no doubt the more phlegmatic Brits are doing it better than our poorer examples. But I'm glad to hear such a trend has started over there: in the recent past there's been precious little writing of the sort that Bob Silverberg calls Real Stuff from Great Britain, and we Americans have had to try to figure out the true feelings and emotional attitudes of various Britfen by reading between the lines of flip prose. The fact that you all know each other in person at pubs and cons has made it difficult for us, but maybe the barbarian influx of

mediates and gamespeople has begun to erode your solidarity enough to cause enough change to benefit us overseas readers. If so...and it's a big if... then it's one of the few benefits fanzine fandom has derived from the eeneo invasion.

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

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Interesting letter from Terry Carr, although in his concentration on fanhistory he fails to say what's interesting about history per se: that it is not so much a record of what went before as an analysis of why things happened as they did - an interpretation of past events that attempts to delineate the great movements of a particular time and the influences that those movements have had on the shape of the present. It's this sort of thing that's been conspicuously absent from a lot of the so-called "fanhistory" that we've had of late, which has concentrated far too much on the raw data - names, places, dates, events - and not nearly enough on the context - the analysis that will give them meaning. As someone who's interested in history and historical methodology (you must have seen something of our bookshelves when you were round here in April right?), I find this sort of thing extremely depressing. Indeed, these are my real objections to the "history" practiced by the likes of Ted White: too much raw data and not nearly enough analysis. Perhaps if he and others were to go away and read the works of Carr, Tawney, Elton Marwick, Butterfield, and even Marx, they might gain a better idea of what they have to do before they can be termed genuine historians.

I think that when American and Australian fans complain that they can't tell the difference between EPSILON and NABU and TAPPEN and whathaveyou they're referring not to the contents and feel of the fanzines in question but to their appearance. After all, they all look pretty much the same: they're printed on multi-coloured quarto paper with a cartoon cover and no interior illustrations...to someone coming across them for the first time, or someone who hasn't read enough of them to become acquainted with the personalities behind them, there probably is some difficulty in telling them apart. But then again, this isn't much of an excuse; look at how similar a number of Australian fanzines are, with their articles on women's rights and nuclear power and the space programme; or how similar some of these great thick American genzines are...a statement which will no doubt draw howls of protest from those who feel mortally offended by it, but then I haven't read enough of either to know. Which perhaps places me in the same position as those American and Australian fans who complain about EPSILON et al; we're operating out of ignorance, and should all shut up until we have a better knowledge of each others fanzines.

Not much left to say now. Two things, in fact: a) I recall having almost exactly the same run-in over "standards" - ie., mistaking an emphasis on the quality of fanwriting with a purported desire to censor the contents - as you, in this case with no less a fan than Vince Clarke (see NOT SCIENCE FANTASY NEWS 3 - and perhaps NSFN 4 if he prints my response), who should have known better; and b) what does Marc Ortlieb mean when he claims that I'm getting all wound up about the current arguments over fandom and fannish

ideology? Perhaps I should take a leaf out of Ted White's holy book and demand he prove this assertion by reference to specific things he's said...

No, there was a third thing...like, we loved that coy reference to "my dancing partner" in one of the ALBACON reports! Grooving the night away, indeed!

((As I see it those who knew knew, and those that didn't didn't need to. I've also got my reputation as a gentleman to remember....))

p.s. Incidentally, in the phrase "repressed teenage adolescent" (bottom of page 5), the middle word is redundant. Adolescents are by definition teenagers.

((Not so, not so at all. While teenagers may well be adolescent by definition adolescents are those who, while not still children are not yet mature. That being so I'm sure we can both think of people in their twenties who are clearly still adolescent.))

MICHAEL ASHLEY

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No more puzzling over the nature of EPSILON. All is revealed in the grimness of your creative act: the time, effort, focussing, refining, the multiple drafts, the desire for precision. Spontaneity is only mentioned so it can be dismissed as an illusion. I said in some earlier letters how EPSILON seemed so manufactured and lacking in vitality - hardly surprising, though, since you've got such a deadening grip on your creative powers. Do you think you're writing a scientific account or something? With all this focussing and refining (ie. narrowing) you're presumably chucking out all the irrelevant material (ie. the sort of stuff in which a lot of the interest generally lies) until you're left with just the bare bones of some fannish debating point - and who gives a fuck about those at the best of times?

((What arrant nonsense! Re-writing is hardly something I've just invented, and I use it for exactly the same reason as anyone else; ie. to tighten up the writing. All earlier drafts contain are sloppier versions of what ultimately appears not these 'interesting irrelevancies' you seem to desire.))

This wouldn't be so bad if you didn't go on to elevate this minor activity with a lot of dull explanation: "who has any respect at all", "the fanzine medium", "attains a form", "as my ability allows", "aiming all the while", "I try my utmost", "convey my meaning"...plod, plod, plod, let's talk about our art, let's be pompous it makes it all sound so much more worthwhile. And then there's all this sensitive artist-like moaning about your dumb readers being too thick or lazy to understand you. Hand on brow, lip thrust out belligerently, oh and I tell you if you only knew, the struggle, the fruitlessness of it all when the dull brains can't follow.....

((Yaaay, tell it like it is, baby! Hey it's really neat to see you using that old technique...you know, the one where you take a piece of writing such as, say, the first paragraph of this letter, and go through it extracting at random: "the nature of EPSILON", "all is

revealed", "the grimness of your creative act", "the desire for precision" "dismissed as an illusion", "lacking in vitality", "deadening grip", "a scientific account", etc., ad nauseum. Nice to know they still teach this sort of thing on lit.crit courses. It's hardly subtle but it is effective, and if you keep it up you may yet get that degree in English))

Curious you should mention masturbation as most fanzine reviews are metaphorically not a great deal more than this. Here at Freudian Fandom we've always been suspicious that EPSILON is an anagram of Lo, Penis! ((and not above stealing gags from DRUNKARD'S TALK, apparently)), while your name sounds strangely like Rub Hard-on. Possibly I may be on to an explanation here for your stated reverence for fanzine critics. It's revealing that they "command respect" - clearly you yearn for chastisement. Presumably what happened is that your early efforts were ignored and, frustrated by the retirement of your early sex fantasy idol Greg Pickersgill, you have made subsequent issues of EPSILON ever more unreadable hoping for a virile fanzine reviewer to sternly punish you. Rob, what can I say to solace you, except that perhaps D.West will get around to writing to EPSILON one day?

((Ooooh, you bitch, you. Actually, mention of D.West does lead us, somewhat perversely, to our next correspondent....))

WALT WILLIS

32 Warren Rd., Donaghadee, N.Ireland BT 21 OPD

Thank you very much for sending me EPSILON 14, and the previous issues. I feel guilty for not having commented before. The reason was not any lack of interest, but partly the lethargy which afflicts me these days and partly a feeling that I didn't have anything to contribute. I felt a bit like an oldtime football fan, full of memories of Stan Matthews and other droopy-drawerred heroes, attending a modern match where the virile young fans of today are battling it out on the terraces around him.

However there seems much less of that recently, and your kind remarks about my piece in MICROWAVE are encouraging, so I'll try to be equally helpful.

Your long lead-in to the fmz review column is fascinating to any fellow toiler in that particular vineyard, but I have a feeling it's foredoomed to failure if its function is to head off indignant reaction to your criticisms. As you point out yourself so cogently in your editorial, most people do not really take in, still less remember, anything in the way of close reasoning, and any of it remaining in their memories is easily swept away by emotion. So quoting your own standards at an outraged faned is as likely to assuage him as a document demonstrating asymmetrical striping is likely to calm a tigress defending her cubs. I doubt if there is anyway to write an honest fmz review column without arousing indignation, but if there is it can only be to ensure your standards are implicit in the review itself, and are illuminated by kindness and understanding.

((Au contraire. Since what I say seems to me no more than the voice of sweet reason I never expect adverse reaction. I also believe in Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy....))



From that point of view I find your reviews curiously uneven, as if you had adopted different stances according to your estimate of the likely reaction of the faned involved. For instance you seem to expect some sort of onslaught from Polley and Owen, and give the impression that you are 'getting your retaliation in first' as they say in Rugby Union these days. Whereas you seem to regard Terry Hill as an amiable sort of idiot who can be safely patted on the head. I wonder about this. "Writers are vulnerable creatures armed with deadly weapons they cannot resist using" and the evidence of the interminable controversies which have been raging about obscure points of meaning and motivation in yours and other fanzines seems to demonstrate that the toughest nut is as easily hurt as the most sensitive neo. Mind you I don't disagree with any of your judgements in so far as I can assess them, except that I don't think it's reasonable to suggest that Terry Hill should have rewritten his material with bridging paragraphs: to my mind that would have been overcrediting, when all that was needed was to return or rewrite the weaker components.

It must be a couple of years since I read anything by Hunter S. Thompson, but I think I would have recognised the echoes of his style in your con-report even without the clue afforded by the first sub-title. I thought you hit off to perfection his blend of blinding perceptiveness and manic irrationality, and I marvel at your own perceptiveness in recognising how peculiarly suitable this style is for convention reports.

TED WHITE

1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046, USA.

I like the idea of you reviewing fanzines: sharpening your skills on specific targets (and besides it's easier than finding engrossing new topics on which to incisively comment each issue - whoops, catch that split infinitive...), but I think you need to do it some more in order to tighten your focus and develop as a fanzine critic. Your evenness of tone stands you in good stead, but I felt these two reviews were a trifle long for what they had to say (and besides which you didn't comment on my contributions to MICROWAVE).

I was reading along in the second half of your conreport when I experienced a pang of *deja vu*. It was in the second paragraph on page 15. It reminded me sharply of my arrival in London in 1965 before the Worldcon. My plane arrived very early - sixish - and I had been dressed for a hot August day in New York. It was 57 and I froze in the draft of the many open windows of the bus from Heathrow, only to find upon arrival at my hotel that I could not get my room until mid-afternoon - but the super-efficient hotel had siezed my bags when I'd entered (giving me a claim check to be turned in when I registered) and I couldn't even get any warmer clothing to wear for my wait. So, with half a day to kill, cold and exhausted, what did I do? I rode the Underground, which was warm and intrinsically fascinating for a subway fan (I'd already read a book-length history of the London Underground and understood the reasons for the different styles of cars and lines). I bought a ticket to the nearest stop, went out, and then took an hours-long journey via the most circuitous route back to my original stop.

Good Lettercol. Peter Weston's letter was fascinating, and not least for his description of, and egoboo for, VOID. VOID wasn't all micro-elite, however; the mix was similar to that in GAMBIT, with editorials and letters in micro-elite and most of the general contributions in elite or pica. It's odd to find twenty-year-old egoboo on VOID here, especially as I recently got a letter from Martin Tudor, after he'd read Peter's VOIDS, which was also full of twenty year-old egoboo. I'm not complaining; egoboo for old fanzines is like royalty cheques on old books - both unexpected and a welcome pleasure.

Terry Carr's letter puts into words feelings I've long held, but was never able to articulate so clearly. Yes, fanhistory satisfies my curiosity, and I'm very curious about anything which interests me. I think Weston's letter taken with Terry's answers West's comments about the impossibility of getting much out of fanzines that came before one's time. If you have the inclination, you can get all you want out of old fanzines.

((I know what you mean about the effect of receiving old egoboo because when I sent the writer of the next letter her copy of EPSILON 14 it occurred to me to include a xerox of some egoboo directed at her and her fanzine SEAMONSTERS via the mailing comments in an issue of the Nielsen Haydens' ZED about a year ago. This had the effect of prompting the first communication in a long time from.....))

SIMONE WALSH

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Here I am, shamed into a response!

It was very good of you to send EPSILON 14 and the copy of the egoboo bit. When I read the "Who's Simone Walsh?" part I was ridiculously pleased - a stupid smile wouldn't leave my face and I had to rush and show Brian (the article - he's seen my face before!). We still work in the same building - how's that for togetherness? But not for the same company anymore.

Reading fanzines is like opening a music-box - the music comes out but it's always the same tune. I don't mean that nastily, it's just that fannish topics are always the same ones. I remember Greg getting very irate when I made that comment a couple of years ago - he seems to thrive on sameness and the status quo - and declared that it was an important part of fandom. You know; It Is Written, and The Way Things Are, etc., and I had lost the divine right to knock because I had lost my union card, so-to-speak, since I had been out of things so long. To me that attitude is the Archie Mercer of the 80s attitude.

Yes, I'm definitely out of fannish step these days - I even found that long article by D. West in TAPPEN very boring. Condemning people who don't like the odd D. article is unfair. D. doesn't have to be great every time he writes, no matter how much blood and effort he puts into something. It is still possible to be articulate, eloquent, and bloody boring. I accept that all comment is subjective - so people should be allowed to be at peace with their opinions and not have to worry about saying the "wrong thing" and perhaps showing themselves to be out of step with "accepted" fannish opinion, ie. that of Greg or D. or any of the other Super-Beings. (Tho' I must add that in that TAPPEN article when D. talks about himself it's fascinating; it's just the pontificating I get bored by.)

Anyway, it's about time the latest crop of new fans started complaining that the Establishment was elitist; then D. could come down from the mountain and make another extremely long pronouncement. From outside it's easy to knock, I know, but the politics of fandom never appealed to me. (Although it is very easy to get involved in everything connected with the burning fannish issues, at the end of the day what does it matter?) I realise that you actually enjoy getting all serious about Fandom, but to me it was always a place where one had fun. Fun Inc., and all that.

Scotland isn't such a bad place to be after all. I had intended to go to ALBACON, but was so home-sick that we went back to London for Easter. We have on occasion been to the street-level bar at the Albany, and it's odd to think that the hotel has swarmed with people I know.

By the way, have you seen your look-alike these days? John Travolta? My god what has that man done to himself? I thought he had a brain! It's odd how muscle just makes men look stupid. I was having a discussion with Sarah the other day because I just can't understand today's girl finding Nick Heywood attractive. She was explaining (patiently) that being wimpish is the "in" thing. Perhaps I understand her better now - I preferred the wimpy John to the muscle-bound creature he is now.

The weekend just gone by saw Brian and I in Bristol. We drove down to take Sarah up to Manchester where she is about to embark on an English degree course at Manchester Poly. Bet that makes you feel old. (I've got used to the feeling, but most fans probably still think of Sarah as about 13 years old - and she spent a year contemplating after A-levels before deciding which direction to take.) Anyway, as Sarah and B and I were all driving from her Manchester digs to find the Poly, low and behold Owens Park came into view. Nearly fell off my seat - didn't expect to see that place ever again.

Thanks again for EPSILON and the cutting; nice to know I'm not forgotten.

((My pleasure.))

MARTYN TAYLOR

Flat 2, 17 Hutchinson Square, Douglas, Isle of Man

Strange emotions were evoked by reading EPSILON 14, in that whenever you voiced an opinion I found myself agreeing with you. Worrying that. Do you think you may be getting on in years, O Wise Master?

Your reaction to that MATRIX cover was very much in line with my own, except you thought the emission semen whereas I thought it urine, our hero being in that posture characteristic of addressing oneself to a public urinal. Don't suppose it makes that much difference. It was a calculatedly offensive insult to specific members of the BSFA (and others). Hardly seems the appropriate thing to put on the cover of the BSFA's genzine, does it? Wonder what makes Polley think he has the right to grossly insult the members to whom he is beholden. After all, he is the editor not the 'proprietor' of MATRIX. I think he ought to resign, and if he won't jump he should be pushed - despite the practical problems. Even before this I had my doubts about his fitness for the job, and until he goes I for one won't be writing for MATRIX again - don't see why I should devote my time to obliging someone I have no respect for.

((I wouldn't go so far as to suggest that Polley should be 'impeached', and not solely because of the difficulty in getting someone else to do the job. No, as I see it he must, by now, be only too aware of his error of judgement in running that cover what with the storm of protest it recived, both in letters to MATRIX and comment in other zines, and with his winning COFF (the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund) at NOVACON as a result. In a way COFF has become fandom's most public form of censure, and when the result was announced at the awards ceremony it got the loudest cheer of the evening. Which pretty well demonstrates the view of a sizeable chunk of British fandom. Recently, however, in the pages of WIZ 7 (which got here Nov.21st) came an indication that at least one American sees the whole affair somewhat differently.

Richard Bergeron (for it is he) affects great hilarity at someone would run the cover I ran last issue on a fanzine containing criticism of the cover of MATRIX 48. As near as I can make out between the hearty guffaws, he feels this is somewhat hypocritical on my part and seems to be saying that he sees no difference between pissing off a pier and pissing over a woman (if the emission is indeed urine, of course). Or rather, he seems to feel that I was attacking the MATRIX cover purely on the basis of 'bad taste'. Which is a little odd when you consider such things as, for example, the alien bondage cover I did for DRILKJIS 5 or my LoC about the giant penis on the cover of DEADLOSS 1 which criticised it solely in terms of its anatomical inaccuracy. The difference between the covers of EPSILON 14 and MATRIX 48 is that the former didn't set out to offend anyone (and so far as I'm aware it hasn't) while the latter, as you point out Martyn, was quite clearly intended to be grossly offensive to a specific group within fandom. And that difference in intent really is all the difference in the world. Still, while I may have caused confusion for one reader I seem to have enlightened another....))

MARC ORTLIEB

P.O. Box 46, Marden, SA 5070, AUSTRALIA.

There's not much difference between science fiction fans and troglodytes is there? Rather than "I dare you to beat me over the head with your club to prove that you're a real man", it's "I dare you to read D.West's PERFORMANCE to prove that you're a real fan". That being said, thank you for shaming me into digging out the appropriate TAPPEN and giving me the impetus to actually read the article. The serious examinations of PERFORMANCE in various fanzines put me off the thing, in that they confirmed my fear that it was one of those terribly serious looks at the state of fandom. Having read it, though I did discover several terribly serious statements about fandom as it is, I also discovered an interesting personal statement and a wonderful series of convention reports of the type that make zines like SMALL FRIENDLY DOG so delightful to read. I can't say that I agree with West. There are those of us interested in the past, and in fandom's past. If there were no anthologies of fanwriting, I wouldn't have the two collections of Bob Shaw's writing, and my life would be that much the poorer.

I think the thing that put me off West's article in the first place was the lack of structure within it. (Not only must an article have structure, but it must be seen to have structure.) Having now read it, I can recognise that

there is a structure there, though it has a plum pudding feel to it. As one of your linear thinkers, I probably would have found the article more accessible had it been instead three articles, or perhaps even two - the convention reports and the serious musings wither fandom. Now that I have read the entire thing I'm impressed by it, and am glad that West did it in the form that he did, pausing only to reiterate the point that, though it is bloody good stuff, its format is forboding ((forboding?)) to the casual reader, and it doesn't really encourage a reader whose interest is lukewarm in the first place to delve further than the first couple of pages.

Whew. Fortunately the real fuss about the article has died down now...

((...and thanks to this autocratic use of the power of editorial control it's about to die down . still further. I mean enough with the egoboo for my rival in this years TAFF race already. And enough, also, with the letters if I mean to get this zine on the streets before Christmas. Time, I think, to switch to WAHF mode...))

WAHF: Arthur D.Hlavaty who wrote his letter "...on a borrowed computer at a hospital not far from the worldcon..." and who supplies "...a bit of historical information on the LBJ/pigfucker story. It first appeared in THE REALIST, as a favourite joke of Johnson's rather than as an alleged event in his political career, but it has passed into folklore as if it really happened. Surely if there had been any evidence that the pigfucker story had actually occurred, THE REALIST would have been the first to tell it for true, as they had no love lost for Johnson. The anecdote appeared in connection with a discussion begun by their publication of a proto-Ballardian tale in which Johnson got caught committing necrophilia with his predecessor's fatal gunshot wound." Interesting. I first came across the tale in a piece by Hunter S. Thompson. Joseph Nicholas followed up his letter with a postcard DNQing its entire contents but later verbally retracted this, which is why it appeared in these pages. Kevin Rattan took me to task over my review of CRYSTAL SHIP: "I agree with certain of your points but feel that in general they are based on certain attitudes as to what constitutes a good fanzine. Though in your review you do look at individual pieces you also casually dismiss the fiction, one piece of which saved what was an otherwise understandard issue of CS (which I consider the best British fanzine), you seem to be arguing against CS for what it sets out to be, the kind of zine it is." Yeah. I still think the fiction was bad but on that one point you have me. Mustn't get so carried away next time. Joy Hibbert, after calling me reactionary, reports that she is "...aware that in most voting areas of fandom there are a group of fans who consider themselves to be 'it' and others this group considers 2nd class at best. With the apas now flourishing in Britain how long will it be before this group start disputing the fact that someone's apa contribution is a fanzine?" Won't happen. Our American cousins are worried about semi-pro publications winning their fanzine Hugo, but apart from this there's no problem with any publication. Lucy Huntzinger, Mat Coward, Dave Collins, Sue Tagkalidis, Harry Warner Jr, Matt Sillars, Jeanne Gomoll, Dave Harwood, Owen Whiteoak, Avedon Carol, Bob Lichtman, and Roger Weddall, who just gets in under the wire. Many thanks to you all. And now a word from our sponsor.....



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...without sideshows. The MEXICON will have a single continuous programme. All programme items, whether fannish or science-fictional, will take place in the same main con hall and we are hoping that no-one will attend one type of item to the exclusion of the other.

...where you can get to know everyone. The MEXICON will be small, compact, and friendly. Because this isn't just another huge convention you'll have a real chance of meeting new people (and some pretty old ones.....).

...held at a good old-fashioned railway hotel - the Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle upon Tyne. This was the hotel that hosted TYNECON '74, generally regarded as one of the best conventions ever to have been held in Britain. Con hall, bar, book room, fanzine room and special convention bar are all close together, something which will focus the energy of the convention. The Royal Station is a spacious old hotel, with plenty of circulation space for socialising, and excellent bar facilities which will remain open 'til at least 2.00 a.m. And it's right next to Newcastle Central Station and the famous Newcastle Metro.

Room Rates : Double/twin  
£13.25 per person  
Single without bath  
£13.25  
Single with bath  
£16.50

And finally...

THIS IS THE CONVENTION.....where attending membership is only £5.00!

Registrations to: Sue Williams,  
19 Jesmond Dene Road, Jesmond,  
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 3QT.

And all this done by only

Kev Williams - Chairman  
Sue Williams - Membership Secretary  
Sue Hepple - Treasurer  
Harry Bell - Hotel Liaison & Bookroom  
John Jarrold - Film Programme  
Chris Evans - SF Programme  
Abi Frost - Fan Programme  
Linda Pickersgill - Fan Group Liaison  
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EPSILON 15.....December-1983.

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and is available for letter of comment, trade, or by editorial whim. Letters received will be considered for publication unless otherwise marked.

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\*

Back page artwork: Stu Shiffman.

\*

This fanzine, you will not be at all surprised to learn, supports...

ROB HANSEN FOR TAFF IN '84

...and urges you all to do likewise.

\*

Final stencil typed 15th December 1983, though I don't know to what musical accompaniment as this

stencil is being typed on the 14th. Nadolig Llawen to those of you who get this issue before Xmas and Blwyddyn Newydd Dda to those who get it after.