

# EPSILON

HANSEN '77





# ODZUNSOZ

-well after calling last issues editorial 'Editorial', and this issues lettercol 'Letters', it seemed like a good idea to put a bit of effort into a heading this time, not much maybe, but a little. ODZUNSOZ is the generic title for the tedious trivia and miscellanea which will be used to pad out the issue. If I've x number of pages to fill then I'll type x number of pages of this old bollox to fill it. This time around it's the usual editorial rambling and the heart in mouth stuff of my recent fannish experiences. The picture opposite, by the way, is (fanfares!!) me. It's there because I have a big ego, among other things (ouch!), tho' since drawing it I've grown a moustache. The first person to ask me whose shoulder I'm sat on will be clubbed to death with the full weight of a complete run of NEW PEMBROKESHIRE REVIEW.

## IT REFRESHES THE PARTS OTHERS CANNOT REACH.

For some time now my interest in booze has been rapidly overcoming my interest in science fiction for a good few years now, and even overwhelming my interest in fandom more than somewhat, even tho' I can't take so much lately without collapsing and I....no, that's not what I wanted to say at all. Actually I know very little about booze-fandom except that they put out leaflets called boozezines (not boozines, which are something else again) and call those put out for response only ego-boozezines.

## I'M ONLY HERE FOR THE BEER.

A frantic search for material to use has turned up the conrep I wrote shortly after FAANCON 2, back in February, so-

The hotel was 50 yards from the station and on bursting in I found I was the first to arrive. Bugger. A search of the surrounding area for food revealed only Indian and Chinese nosh-houses. The Gannets would be pleased. I was starving.

Back at the hotel the Mearas and assorted D&D fans had arrived.

"Hello, Rob", said Mike Meara, thrusting a pound note into my hand, a ritual repeated with each new arrival. Other con organisers please copy.

It took me ten minutes to find my room, since the hotel was not unlike Hampton Court in three dimensions, at the end of a dark and tortuous passage. Rooms were small but beds turned out to be very comfortable.

Gannetfandom arrived at ten o'clock that evening, the con really started, and I crashed out in the early hours.

Nice breakfast on Saturday, tho' my stomach was protesting at the assaults of the night before. All around was talk of balrogs, orcs, goblins and stuff. No doubt the serving staff thought they were mad, and I was having my doubts. A mere foretaste of the insidious effect Drudge-on and Drag-on was to have on the con. Not being a fan of the game I tend to fall asleep when I sit in on one of those incredibly exciting expeditions I'm always hearing about but occasionally I have ideas for the thing which I pass on to a friend unfortunate enough to be afflicted by the malady, in this case Brian Rouse. I suggested introducing time-travel into D&D.

"Great idea, Rob", said Erian.

"You daft sod", said Harry Bell.

That afternoon was the Wales v France rugby match which could not be missed, but I was forgetting I was in England and the TV guide said they were only showing fifteen minutes of highlights of the match. Disappointed I settled down in front of the screen consoling myself with the fact that as I didn't know the final score I could squeeze maximum enjoyment from what little was being shown.

"France won, you know", said Arthur Cruttenden, taking a seat. Gnaah.

When we found, that evening, that there weren't enough fans not playing D&D to keep the bar open there were dark mutterings and talk of a purge. They were failing in their primary faanish duty to keep the booze flowing. Still the fannish mind is rarely defeated and a room party was swiftly organised. I left in the early hours and I heard the party went through to seven.



On Sunday I awoke early, grabbed a copy of TRUE RAT ATE, and ran hell for leather for the lavatory where the previous nights excesses wreaked their worst. Excellent stuff from Leroy, had me laughing out loud even tho' I was feeling rough (rough quite enjoyed it). However when I bent down to pull my pants up I brained myself on a strategically placed cock (stopcock that is). Rearing back in pain I yelled out "Oh, botheration!", or something like that, and staggered back to my room.

The bloody tele-soccer gave me nothing but trouble during the morning as it insisted on wiping out my score regardless of who I was playing or which side I chose. At one point it even transferred my score to the other player. Hardest game was against Rob Jackson whom I knew I couldn't defeat but was doing my damndest to hold off against. During one particularly long volley Rob commented that you dare not even blink. Since I was seeing white trails through streaming eyes and beginning to hallucinate I had to agree.

That afternoon, after the goodbyes, I made my way to my uncles place and after an enjoyable evening arrived back at the station shortly before 10 o'clock only to find that I'd misread the timetable and had missed the last train to Cardiff by two hours. I was stranded in Derby.

## IT'S THE TASTE THAT MAKES YOU DO IT.

The biggest event of recent months, of course, was the formation of Welshfandom as a definite entity when Bryn Fortey, Mike Collins and myself formed the South Wales SF Group. I don't know how many of you are familiar with Bryn and Mike so I'll reprint the descriptions of them I put on the Welshfandom poster at Coventry:

**Bryn Fortey:** Grand Old Man of Fandom, almost a famous writer and nearly a BNF, Bryn has been active in fandom a long time. Bryn is the editor of RELATIVITY and has also published one-shot fanzines such as SUPER CRUD '69 and ACTION REPLAY.

**Mike Collins:** Welshfandom's ace photographer, Mike can often be seen photographing people in embarrassing situations but for a price he will destroy the negative. Mike's hobbies include moustache growing and getting up in the morning.

While on the subject of Welshfandom I'd better say that the Welshfan dragon badge will, in future, only be available to members of the actual group and any Welsh-born actifan we feel is particularly deserving. This means that Welsh birth alone is no longer automatic entitlement and the move is due to the fact that each badge takes about an hour to make and I just don't have the time.

## IT'S ALL MEAT, A REAL TREAT...(EH??)

There should be a conrep from Paul Kincaid following this piece but I still want to chronicle a couple of the events I witnessed at Coventry.



Thursday was really nice. As seems to happen a lot these days I was one of the first to arrive at the hotel but within a half hour Ratfandom had arrived and a pleasant period of conversation ensued. Later on Greg Pickersgill and Rob Holdstock decided they couldn't last the weekend without some porn. Curious, I tagged along and in a newsagents adjacent to the hotel they found an array of porn outstanding for what was, after all, just a small provincial news-agent. Having decided which books they wanted there ensued an argument as to was going to take them off the shelf and pay for them. Greg offered to pay if Rob would take them to the counter. Rob refused but said he would pay if Greg would take them to the counter. I couldn't believe it! Two of fandom's hard guys (well, one hard guy and a big softie) and neither had the nerve to buy their porn. Not being particularly worried what the woman behind the counter would think I offered to get them, and did. Turning from the counter after paying I couldn't see Greg or Rob. Then I spotted them, way over by the door, waiting for me to bring the books over. When I laughed Rob explained why they wouldn't get the porn themselves:

"You're young enough for them to think you're just a bit immature, but if Greg or I went in for them they'd think we were dirty old men." A feeble excuse, indeed!

On the Friday evening I discovered, to my horror, that I only had £7 left to last me 'til Monday and I spent the rest of the weekend avoiding people I owed a drink. I won't cut it so close next time.

Tele-games are becoming a permanent fixture at British cons so it was no surprise to find myself playing tele-soccer many times during the con. On one occasion I challenged Roy Kettle to a game.

"Don't you dare lose," said Greg, "the honour of Welshfandom is at stake."

I lost to Leroy, 11-7.

"Cretin!", yelled Greg, pushing me aside.

"I'll show you how it should be done!" he shouted, and lost to Leroy, 11-6.

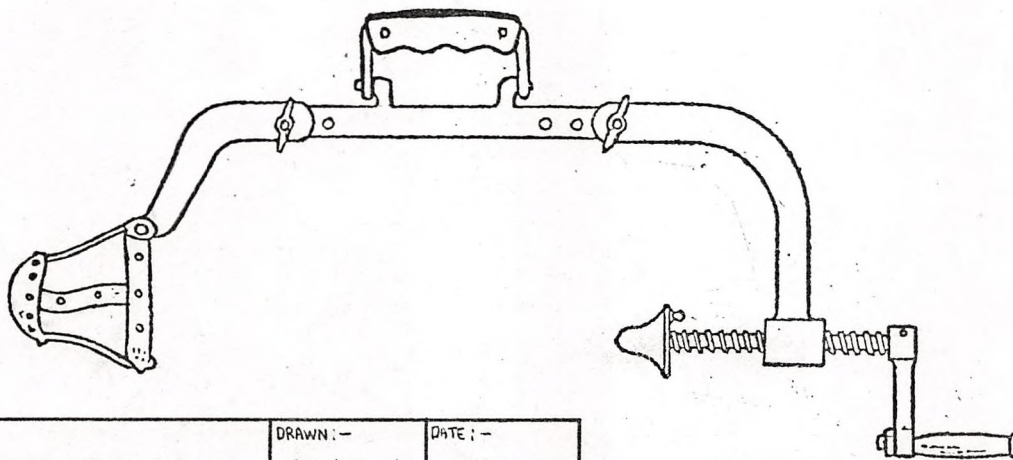
On the Sunday evening Graham Charnock's group, the Burlingtons, provided the music for a disco, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Rob Holdstock has one of the most energetic dancing styles I've seen and I spent a while trying to get a good shot of him. Once he realised this Rob started making rude gestures and making sure there were other dancers between me and him, but in the end I got the photo. The person I really wanted a dancing shot of, however, was Pickersgill, but Greg, unfortunately, just doesn't dance. I arranged for Eve Harvey to get him on the floor but Greg resisted all her efforts. Sometime later I saw Pauline Dungate trying to drag Greg onto the dance floor and rushed to her aid. However Greg saw me as his salvation and the next thing I knew I was dancing with Pauline. At the end of the disco Greg did get up and dance...with Leroy Kettle. They leapt about like a pair of wildly flailing dervishes, people diving out of Greg's manic, and slightly paralytic, gyrating way. What a sight! It was something to tell your grandchildren about in years to come! Unfortunately I'd used my last flash and didn't get a shot of it. Damn!

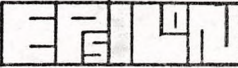

Something happened after the disco, something it is my painful duty to relate. A lot of you will have read in Bryn Fortey's ACTION REPLAY, the tear-jerking saga of Greg Pickersgill and how this fannish giant, sadly past his prime, crashed out at his own party. Now, much as it tears at my heart-strings, fighting to keep back the tears, I'm afraid I must report the next stage in this mournful decline. At his housewarming party Greg crashed out very early but at the easter-con he managed to crash out before he actually reached his own room party. He was found lying in a corridor by a group of concerned friends who had gone in search of him. For a while they just stood there dumbfounded, taking photographs, before actually carrying him bodily into his room. Now are the mighty fallen...what an ignoble end! Sigh. Sniff.

And on that sad note ODZUNSODZ is concluded until next ish which will be out when I've enough good material to make it worth while putting out another issue.

ROB HANSEN...

As a service to fandom EPSILON proudly presents the brainchild of some unsung hero of the drawing board:-  
 ((Charnox please note it can be adapted to fit cats.))



 INC.	DRAWN:- U.N. KNOWN	DATE:- 1977
	SCALE:- AS PER DOG.	
TITLE:- ADJUSTABLE DOG CARRIER...		



# DEJA VU

By **Paul KNEB...**

Nearly there, the Birmingham motorway bumping away under the car, and a second level of familiarity takes over, a more buried level. We've passed the Novacon turnoff, familiar from only five months before, and we're off into a memory that's two years old - though no less clear for that. The road they were always working on during that particular year now leads to the National Exhibition Centre, but that's the only thing that's new. The landscape, and more importantly the cityscape, fit perfectly against the template of my memory.

And we're in Coventry, circling the precinct. On one side the Bus Station where I've stood so many times in snow and sun, across the way the imposingly rich facade of the De Vere Hotel I've entered just once before. Strange how that once is so much more real, though the fine details have become lost and confused in the interval. But I push open the glass doors and the scene is just as it should be, I know my way around without having to explore. And all the crowds of faces are the same, but fleshed out now with accumulated knowledge, I know their names, many of them; and some of them I count as friends.

I was younger then, not just two years of age less. Half-shaped as a person by three years of university in Ireland; but still in vital ways incomplete, a loner depressed by being alone. I haven't cured that state, just made it irrelevant for much of the time. I was a postgraduate student at Warwick University, a big place crowded by too many people for a newcomer like myself, not naturally extroverted, to find friends. I was losing touch with people - turning inwards on myself because I had no-one outside myself I could turn to. One thing only took me out of myself - science fiction. I read the stuff and wrote it - seemingly as an exercise in collecting rejections. But even that was an isolated thing. I would buy books and read them alone in my room, I typed my stories alone at my desk, I could talk about it, but only to people who weren't as interested in the subject as I was - and I'm not very good at small talk, these conversations quickly dried up.

When I felt particularly bored or depressed, about once a month, I would take a little more money than I could actually afford and get a train into Birmingham. Somehow I had found out the address of the Andromeda Bookshop, and it was a way of escape. Once I chatted to Rog Peyton (I didn't know his name then) about a couple of Silverberg novels I'd bought. Once I was there when Ian Watson came in to find out how THE JOHANN KIT was doing, but I'd never heard of him, didn't know what his book was like, and it was in hardback so I couldn't afford to find out. These were isolated, casual encounters, no more significant than passing somebody in the streets. They didn't rescue me from being alone. I didn't associate these people with fandom. By now I had heard of fandom, whilst in Ireland I had made an abortive attempt to join the BSFA (they never even cashed the cheque), but I had no idea what it was. A bunch of UFO nuts, a gang of long-haired wierdos, a sober aggregation of business-suited, serious-talking, big name writers. I wouldn't have felt comfortable in any such gathering; and anyway I had no idea at all how to make contact with such an organisation.

Then I got the silver lining that such a bloody great cloud just had to have. A regular shopping trip into Coventry. I looked in, as usual, at W.H. Smiths, and there was the latest edition of SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY of blessed memory. I didn't buy the rag, even then I had some taste, but I did leaf through it and read the News page. There was an address and the snippet of information that the British Science Fiction Convention would be held in Coventry at Easter, only a few weeks away. I was living in a flat on the campus, and could stay there over Easter without paying any extra rent. I had no idea what to expect, but it seemed like an opportunity not to miss. I scribbled a note of the address - Mr Peter Roberts, Treasurer, I think it was; obviously some rich and influential money-man in a business suit who organised such things as a tax dodger or something. I sent off a cheque, and thought it would be at least something of a change. Take warning from that, ye young and eager seekers after the new, take warning from this shattered shadow of a man two years on.

In a way it's like two different plays being acted out against the same scenery; but I think it's really two different people watching the same play. I've changed a hell of a lot in two years. If changes have got to be Jekyll and Hyde type, then I hope I've reversed the process, becoming Jekyll rather than Hyde. At least nobody at Coventry this year has complained

of attacks by a hairy monster. But then nobody did in 1975 either.

I register at the door, find I have another £2 to pay still, pin on the badge, drop the rest of the papers I'm handed into my briefcase. Not for me the naivety of two years ago when I quickly found a seat, and avidly read through every word of the bunf I was handed. It had seemed a great moment, then, to pin on the badge and become one with all the people fussing around me. One way I've changed is to become more blasé. I don't know whether it's a good thing, but at least it saves time.

Two years ago I met three people throughout the whole Con, all first timers like myself, all of us too shy, too overawed by the occasion, to attempt to break into any of the cliques that seemed like solid walls all around us to us outsiders. And, of course, none of the ENFs would bow down from their cloudy eminences to welcome a newcomer to the fold. Of those first three I've lost touch with two. The third was Rob Hansen, I remember during the banquet we had sat in the bar reading each other's fledgling stories and mouthing appropriate lies. For some reason we exchanged addresses and had communicated fairly frequently after the Con. Now I'm supposed to be sharing a room with him because there is no university for me this year. He's been here since Thursday and I have to seek him out from the six hundred odd (take that how you want to) souls crowding the De Vere. Where to look? Simple answer.

The first fannish phrase I learned, from the first programme item I attended in 1975, the introduction of celebrities, was: 'He's in the bar'. Where else? I make my way upstairs to the bar on the second floor, occasionally nodding a greeting as I go. Mostly these nods are ignored, or people pretend they didn't see me, but at least I know them to nod to. But the bar isn't the bar, it has been metamorphosed into the book room, looking smaller than ever because more spread out. Still, it turns out Rob is there, leafing through a book he can't afford to buy. We greet each other like long lost brothers: 'Hi' 'Oh, hello' 'Where's the room?' 'Upstairs' 'Great'.

Well, I'm here, I've changed and now I'm ready to meet my public. A LoC in MAYA (two years and I speak a new language) seems to have provoked some interest. I've recently received several zines from people I'd never heard of before, and I can only ascribe this to the letter in MAYA. Obviously, then, there must be a great horde of people downstairs anxious to meet this scintillating and erudite letter writer. I go down, and nothing. Morosely I wander round the bookroom, say hello to Chuck, and still my way is not obstructed by the fawning millions. Maybe things haven't changed that much in two years after all; then, also, I sometimes felt like I was invisible.

Then I see Ken Bulmer standing about chatting someone up. I want to have it out with Ken (no, not that: you've got a distrustful mind). Last September he had brightened my day by writing to tell me that one of my stories had at last been accepted, since then nothing. We were supposed to be being paid by February and here it is April. Surely the world should not be so long deprived of my masterpiece? So up I go to him and ask 'What's happened to my story, Ken?' And that is different - two years ago I would never have approached an author without a forelock tugging 'Please, sir, excuse me, sir, but would you mind please autographing this book, sir.' Even Chris Priest got that treatment, though he rather spoiled the effect by being young, long-haired and denim clad. Anyway, none of my stories had got so near publication in 1975.

Ken and I chat for about ten minutes (note the casual use of his name, as I say I'm getting blasé), and at cross-purposes. Apparently he's talking about the second story I sent him, and explains how NEW WRITINGS is going into suspended animation for an indefinite period. Under the wrong impression as I am this is not calculated to cheer me up - Ken has declared his intention of not enjoying this Con, perhaps he's proselytizing - and it's rubbed in a little later in the day.

How I've changed in the last two years can be best illustrated I think, by what I see as the focal points of each Con. In 1975 it was the Con Hall and the book room, now it's the bar and the book room. Then I would religiously attend every programmed item to gaze in awe at the god-like beings who paraded before me. I even sat right through the auctions, God help me, though I could no way afford the few things I would have liked. Now, at every opportunity, I make my way to the bar or the lounge, find a glass to occupy my hand, and sometimes am heard to mutter: 'What's on now? Oh, I don't think



I'll bother.' The hero worship is a thing of the past, largely, if any shreds remain they are destroyed on Saturday when Chris Priest confides to me that he has read my letter in GHAS 3 that morning whilst on the bog. They're only human, in case you hadn't guessed.

But it's still Friday, the Con has started in earnest and I'm in the bar clutching a half of lager. (I'd had a hungover day on Thursday, so I'll stick to halves throughout the Con to at least give an illusion of sobriety). And there is Pete Weston leaning against the bar talking to D. West. I approach, Pete doesn't look exactly overjoyed to see me, I ask about the story I sent him just after Novacon, he says 'Sorry . . .' At least he has the good grace not to look happy with his evident lack of good taste. I must say, it's a great start to a Con. How I envy myself of two years ago, sitting on my own, getting what solitary pleasure I could without facing such trials and tribulations.

In the face of such philistines I even contemplate giving up fiction and turning to fan writing, or concentrating on my new career of copywriting. At least the fans seem to want me, Rob says he'd like a conrep for EPSILON, John Harvey ponders the possibility of me doing an article for GHAS, Ian and Janice Maule put me down as a possible contributor to their new zine NABU (luck to the serpent-headed dragon - see, I did check up on the name). Gra Poole introduces himself shortly after my encounter with Mr. Weston and showers me with zines before making fastidious little notes on the sheet he seems to carry about with him everywhere. The natives are becoming friendly (it's only after I leave the Con that I actually manage to read GHAS and discover Eve Harvey saying nasty things about my reviews in MALFUNCTION. But the reviews are almost as old as my contact with fandom, and perhaps they weren't all that good).

Of Friday evening I shall say only that it involves exposing myself to the fannish drug of TV games, an encounter from which I do not emerge entirely unscathed, but I'm not the only one. And that's something I couldn't say two years ago. Not only were TV games a thing of the future, but fannish traditions and intoxicants (other than beer) were arcane mysteries to me; and I would never have even been on the periphery of a group that included Greg Pickersgill, Roy Kettle, Malcolm Edwards, diverse Gannets, and Gra Poole. I already know the Gannets slightly, but otherwise this is my first encounter with this group of people. Greg, I think, regards me at first as some strange breed of Welsh fan, presumably because of my links with Rob; but most people seem to regard me as a reasonably uncorrupted form of Manchester fan. I suppose at least that means I'm recognised as a fan.

Three hours sleep and it's Saturday morning. I think I only booked the room to store the books and zines I acquire during the Con. But lack of sleep has its effects, not only a certain listlessness first thing, but also a cloudiness of memory. The programme is the worst feature of the Con, practically nothing in it to grab the imagination or interest. Or is that the loss of my early naivety speaking?

I remember a Mastermind competition in which Pete Weston said the questions on Silverberg at Mancon were so hard that even Silverberg couldn't answer them all. That isn't so, actually, because I set the questions and Silverberg did answer them all except for one about pseudonyms for which he claimed the fifth amendment.

I also remember a panel on women's lib in sf. Perhaps the greatest impact the panel makes is with Gerry Webb's stout defence of 'male chauvinism' against the popular tide of opinion. I speak with him later in the day, one of a group having a quiet drink in the Three Spires Bar (Ian and Janice Maule, Ian Williams and I having gone there as the only sure way of escaping D. West's insistent collecting for the 'Best' award). Gerry's ideas don't sound so unreasonable when the pace is less frenetic and he has the chance to develop his theme.

Another panel on Sunday, the obligatory writer's panel, includes one point of interest, a remark by Chris Priest that is swept away on the flood of discussion and undeservedly lost. Why do these panels not discuss the tools and everyday business of writing? he asks. I wonder, in the absence of a British Clarion wouldn't there be enough 'aspiring' writers such as myself at a Con to welcome whatever scraps may be tossed out by a professional writer?

On Saturday, of course, the high point of the day, of the Con even; is the regular worship at the shrine of St Bob the Buffoon. There I see the largest crowd I see in any one place at any time during the Con, gathered to hear Mr Shaw recount his aged jokes and terrible puns as he tells the story of the

Beornsdsey Triangle Mystery, his logic throughout impeccably twisted. Such moments would justify any programme.

But as I've said, this, for me at least, isn't a Con that is centred upon the programme. It is inherently a slow, easy Con; a Con for lounging in easy chairs with a group of fellow fan and chat idly of this and that. There are longeurs, but no period of any significant length when I am not in a convivial group of like-minded people. Occasionally an incident might jolt the Con out of its placidity for a moment - the dog attacking the 'Smash' robot, the ubiquitous D. West twisting Greg Pickersgill's chest hairs, about which I only hear not being there to see the incident. At least at this Con I hear about these things, two years ago they would have passed me by completely. Anyway, why should I be interested in such outbreaks of GEH among more established fan?

Mostly, though, it is a relatively gentle affair; not that that means I am not tired, I seem to be on the edge of exhaustion every moment from Saturday morning on. I must be getting older. I did twice as much at my first Con, I'm sure of it. Rushing in five minutes before every programme item was due to start, dashing out again at every break to get a drink or buy books or maybe visit the art show or fan room. So much more, but it didn't get me anywhere near as far as I've got this year. I've got a fantastic amount more out of this Con by not dashing off to every programme item, by sitting around in easy chairs, by not dashing out at 11p.m. to catch the last bus up to the University.

In one conversation on Saturday evening it is decided that one's fannish standing can be calculated by how long Pete Weston and Rob Jackson spend talking to you. My God, after Eastercon I must be of pretty high standing - I am frequently in the company of the Gannets and speak to Rob J several times; while I also have two or three quite long discussions with Pete Weston. Especially on Sunday when circumstances lead me to sharing a lunch table with Pete and also with John and Sheila Bush (do GOH's score extra points?). A profitable encounter that, thanks Sheila.

But Saturday continues; buying more books than I can really afford, as is my wont; visiting the Fan Room for the first time this Con. Two years ago I was bemused by fandom; it was too strange, too amorphous, too large and disparate a thing for me to begin to make sense of. I was wary of it. It was an enthusiasm and I'm a cold, undemonstrative person. And the fanzines, in the main poorly duplicated concatenations of varicoloured paper - how could I possibly justify them in my straightened financial situation. There were photos, as I remember, that were just as much nameless blurs as that mass of people who moved about the hotel. But still, there was a scrap of paper pinned to a wall - 'The Manchester Science Fiction Group meets on the first and third Wednesdays of every month in the Crown and Anchor, Port Street, Manchester', and there was an address for somebody called Presford. I don't know what made me do it, perhaps an unconscious realisation that it would be nice to be a real member of the mass in which I found myself, perhaps sheer masochism, but I made a note of the address. Now look where it's got me. I wander through what I remember as the book room, picking up those zines I've promised myself but haven't received before - TRUE RAT, WRINKLED SKEW, STOP BREAKING DOWN. And John Harvey's there to hand me a copy of GHAS 3 with a LoC of mine in it - the fools didn't even edit it down to a less cumbersome length. And I recognise the people in the photographs around the wall. So it goes - who knows, I may eventually find myself ink-stained and knowledgeable of the intricacies of dupers and litho, celebrated in fan room photos; these things get out of hand.

Saturday night is the Muppets, and an hour of welcome rest stretched out on my bed. The timing necessitates walking out mid-way through a Fan Room discussion on fanzines, but that's no real loss. The thing gets off on the wrong foot anyway. Eve Harvey, drafted in at the last minute to guide the discussion begins: "Which of you produce fanzines?" A show of hands. "Right, which of you don't produce a fanzine?" Not unsurprisingly the rest of the audience shows its hands up, my own included. "Well why are you here?" It's bloody obvious why we're here, we're interested in fanzines, want to know more about them. But the veiled antagonism, the implication that only zine pubbers are real fans, slams the door right in the faces of neos, et al. Preaching to the converted isn't much use for proselytizing, antagonising the newcomer is not a very good way of welcoming them into the fold. Well, alright, maybe established fans have built up a nice little circle of friends, and rather resent the rude intrusion of neos interested predominantly in sf, and who haven't built up the intimacy between longstanding friends



for whom sf is now only of peripheral interest. Fair enough, when I finally penetrate some such group I'll probably feel much the same. But now I'm still pretty much on the outside and I know how it feels to come up against such brick walls of indifference. Of course I know some of them well enough now to know that they're not as bad as they seem, but they do seem bad.

The discussion turns inward, self congratulation and brickbats recognisable only to the cognoscenti. We're a cliqueish lot, fans, and this is just one more example of the clique system at its most blatant. I don't produce a zine, have no intention of doing so in the near or foreseeable future - by some lights that makes me a non-fan, but I don't think so. I do a steadily increasing amount of fannish writing, reviews, articles, LOCs, so why the elitism about fanzine pubbing? The talk doesn't anger me, doesn't even sadden me, just turns me off. And that's something it shouldn't do, especially as fandom seems to be going through something of a stagnant period now, and where are new revitalizing faneds going to come from if not from among these antagonized neos?

Saturday evening is more profitable as far as fannish affairs are concerned, just sitting drink in hand with fluid groups of friends and fellow fan, musing quietly and humourously on the size of cons and how to limit them, social standing within fandom, getting into fandom, and numerous other subjects caught in the ebb and flow of discussion. The atmosphere is right, conclusions aren't reached but views are heard. Just one thing, we're all reasonably established fans, the newest like me in fandom for two years. How valuable that discussion might have been had I joined it two years ago I cannot say, but I wouldn't have felt as isolated as I did.

At last we all make our way into the Con hall for the fancy dress, everyone knows why, everyone knows what's supposed to be coming off - but it doesn't, somebody apparently couldn't summon quite enough Dutch courage. Ah well, maybe next year.

So it's back to the lounge, and an example of D.West's beneficence as he showers us with largesse. Interesting test of character this, who will grovel and scamper about the floor for this bounty? I suppose Rob can be excused, I know he's short of the ready. I manage to scoop up 3P without shifting from my seat. And all the while, against this backdrop of fun and frivolity the serious business of the night is being transacted. All about us passwords are exchanged, ritual phrases uttered - "where's the room party?"

A curious phenomenon this. Even two years ago, as I bounced in bright eyed and eager each morning for the day's round of panels and speeches I was mystified by the shambling lethargic bunch of bleary-eyed head claspers I encountered. Then I heard the magic phrase - 'room party' - and surmised the rest. Yet this is my fifth Con and I still haven't actually attended one of these extravaganzas. Am I missing out on something? I don't know. So this year I'll find out. But it's three a.m. already when I stumble after Rob and someone else into a crowded seventh floor room. Thick atmosphere, people so jammed that most have to stand. I'm too tired already to stand much of this, and almost at once I turn and make my way back to my room to snatch four hours sleep before the whole round starts again.

Two years ago I took Sunday at the same hectic pace I took every day, dashing about encumbered by a growing stack of books as I tried to get everything I could because tomorrow I must leave. Now the pace is different, slower, a different gear. It's not the Con that has changed but me, ready now to start winding down. For me there is a new spectre on the horizon - work on Tuesday - and I'm in no shape, and no mood for it. Two years ago I was still a student, and had another two weeks to recover in. Last year was one of blessed unemployment, I had as long as I cared to take to recover. But now I must be sure I'm fresh once more to persuade the unsuspecting public to buy this make of pipe insulation, that kind of fitted kitchen.

Yet I'm not the only one spending more time in the lounge, though most say they've arranged to have Tuesday off. I must remember that for next time. It's an easy day, then, the formula much as before but less rushed. More books, more drinks, more languid and pleasing conversations, occasional programme items. Brian Aldiss arrives, and when I get Harry Harrison to sign one of his books (yes I still do that; someday, who knows . . .) he berates me for not having a book for Brian to sign: "Why don't you get one of Brian's books? Only cost you the price of a pint. I'll go half." So I do, but Harry doesn't.

Then it's time for the banquet. Two years ago Rob and I had come together in the bar, each with a thick folder under his arm. Bought a drink, found a quiet corner, then: "This is my first story. I still think it's one of my best." "This is the one I'm working on at the moment. It just needs a little re-writing." And: "I had a nice long rejection letter from Hilary Bailey." "SF Monthly only seem to send out form letters." "I had a bit of scribble on one of mine once." High brow stuff. Can't memories be embarrassing? I shudder now at some of the stories we enthused over then.

This year, as in everything, we're more blasé. An hour spent stretched out on our beds - old men recouping our energies - then down to the bar again for more drinks, more conversation. Then the ritual procession to hear the words of wisdom that drip from the lips of those who've spent the evening stuffing their faces. If I've spent the weekend getting lost between how it is and how it was, now it's like time has stood still. The Fairfax Suite hasn't changed, the tables are in the same places flanked by the same faces. I stand at the back of the hall in the same place I stood before, leaning against a curtained off blackboard. Then Pete Weston stands up to speak (rampaging rabbits, when am I?)

Then it's up to the dance where, among a horseshoe of Gannets, we watch with tolerant amusement as our elders and betters make fools of themselves, like puppets controlled by a spastic hand. A deaf and uninformed observer would probably judge these bodily convolutions to be mass epilepsy. But such innocent amusements pall on the non-dancer, so before long I return to the bar, gravitating naturally over to Gra Poole, the demon-king of TV games. Imminently defeated, I am yet hooked again, and stay to watch the epic Poole/Edwards match. Having seen him spend the Con winning everything in sight it does make Malcolm seem a little more human to see him get beaten. Ah well, must be the sadist in me, after all, he's a nice enough fellow, I suppose.

And so to bed, as the saying goes. I'm lucky tonight, a whole five hours sleep, but then I'm laid up in the morning. The last day. Doesn't time fly when you're having fun? Actually, while it was happening, the Con seemed interminable. Now Thursday's hangover seems like yesterday (or is that the Con?)

Today I put on shoes rather than the pumps I've been plodding around in all weekend, more sensible for the journey home. No, I'm not into trivia (despite all the rubbish crammed into this article), this is a significant fact. All this weekend I've been puzzled by something, I've not felt very static, what's all the fuss about. Then I change footwear, earthshaking myself or whatever the hell it is (I'm not up on these high flow technical things, see), and all of a sudden I'm getting three shocks in as many seconds. Damned hotel must have been saving them up for me, saving them for two years and all since I was shock free then, too.

And I'm left waiting for my folks to pick me up, sitting in the lounge as the Con disintegrates about me. Then, and in the car, I take the opportunity to read some of the zines I've acquired. I'd fancied doing a conrep, Rob said he'd like it for EPSILON. A new career as distinguished fan writer opens up after the setbacks to my professional career. Then I read Rob Holdstock's report on the Dublin writers' convention - how the hell can I match that. Perhaps I should stick to copywriting.

I get home and a big manila envelope awaits me with a story returned by Ken Bulmer. But that's not important, what are important are the contract and the cheque that are in there with it. All of a sudden I'm a professional writer. Feels good.

Tuesday, thankfully a slow day at the agency, only an hour of work all told. The euphoria lingers, I've signed the contract, deposited the cheque. To hell with Rob Holdstock, I'll write that conrep . . .

"Nearly there, the Birmingham motorway . . ."

Paul Kincaid is the editor of BEARD GROWERS WEEKLY and has recently sold his first short story.



\*\*\*\*EDITOR ACCUSED OF BEING RACIST.....\*\*\*\*GREG PICKERSGILL LOCS.....\*\*\*\*\*ALL THIS AND MORE IN THE IMAGINATIVELY TITLED.....

DAVE LANGFORD... 22 Northumberland Ave., Reading, Berks, RG2 7 PW..

Thanks for € (Assumption is that its your 5th issue: I look forward to receiving 3, 7, 0 etc., in due course...)

((Har bloody har. This ish was gonna be ETA but to spite you it's EPSILON again.))



PAUL KINCAID... 20 Sherbourne Road, Middleton, Manchester M24 3EH..

I quite enjoyed (EPSILON) though, as you say in the editorial, its a bit short. The artwork, in particular, I found excellent and the strip I quite enjoyed, though you are right in saying the story is only average.

TERRY JEEVES... 230 Bannerdale Road, Sheffield S11 9FE..

...a very ambitious opening fanzine indeed. I was particularly taken with the excellent layout and striking artwork...all excellent with the exception of the chubby little cherub on page 6. The relevance of the text -and indeed, the accompanying art to 'Facts of Life' escaped me I'm afraid.

((The strip in EPSILON was planned more as a drawing exercise than a serious attempt at fanfic, hence the only average plot. Sorry you didn't follow it ,Terry, but basically it was about a man unaware of the 'facts of life' on his world passing through puberty.))

DAVE ROWE... 8 Park Drive, Wickford, Essex SS12 9DH..

(EPSILON was) neat and spaced out but a little too sparse. For instance, the Siliconrep was very much a "first we...then I...so we...and then..." sort of a write up, that could have done with being somewhat more lively.

I admire your patience and originality with 'Facts of Life', also the relatively high standard of illustration (relative to UK 'zines that is). Altho' you seem to have some fetish for fish-eye views of runners. ((eh?))

However for 12 pages with 1 1/2 spaced lines EP does have a quality of freshness, and competant freshness at that. If you decide to continue with it I wish you every success-- altho' I have a feeling that most fen will just say "real neat 'zine" and very little else (rather like me).

((Yeah,that does seem to have been the general response. However,who better to comment on that very point than the master himself...))

GREG PICKERSGILL... ((who currently resides at his present address.))

I don't think you should feel unduly disturbed by non-comment on the text of EPSILON; the main flaw was one you know yourself; the minimalisation of the text itself. What you wrote was perfectly reasonable fanwriting, not fantastic but readable and enjoyable, the only thing wrong being that there wasn't enough of it. As you can appreciate one doesn't want a fanzine to look at, one is after a good chunk of words that relate to something familiar, fannish, and readable. All this sort of FANZINES: THE IMAGE OR THE WORD nonsense is a false argument, its the words that count, no mistake. Unless you can put them,(enough of them) together properly you might as well not bother, even if graphically the thing is very good, as was EP. Remember fans get to see enough white space staring at sheets of paper in their typewriters trying to summon up the latest gem of wit and perception.

((Advice taken, Greg, and I hope this issue is more to your taste.))

doug barbour... 10808 - 75th avenue, edmonton, alberta, canada t6e 1k2.

i found a few too many typos & left out words in yr conrep yet, despite the fact that you criticised it properly in yr intro, it still managed to suggest that silicon was a good fannish small fun con. (i recall the difference i found between torcon ii, which i didnt really enjoy & v-coniii which i did. the latter was smaller and i knew people: that made a great difference.

HARRY WARNER JR... 423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, USA..

It isn't every day that a fanzine from Wales arrives. It isn't every year that a fanzine makes the trip across the atlantic in little more than a month by surface mail, either. Most UK fanzines require two or three months to make the journey, so maybe Captain Nemo or someone more efficient than the usual postal channels has the contract to handle Welsh fanzines.

((The Celts are an old race, Harry, older by far than those Anglo-Saxon upstarts, and steeped in ancient mystic lore. It is safer not to question these things.))

You shouldn't feel any concern over any disjointed effect that shows up in the Siliconrep. "Disjointed" is one of the essential words to describe the impressions that anyone receives from attending any con. So its virtually a necessity to convey that impression in a conreport, if its to reproduce accurately the experience of the writer.

The fact that you got more pleasure out of that small con than from the bigger ones you attended is something that is becoming evident in United States fandom, too. It wouldn't be surprising if the giant cons became mostly the province of the pros in promotion and programming and operation, while the real fans concentrate their attention on the smaller events. Unless, that is, the pros prove incapable of keeping up the big con tradition. The collapse of that all-pro con that was planned in New York last fall and the declining attendance at Star Trek cons which have so many professional aspects are ominous omens.

I got a melancholy pleasure out of your difficulties with the milk bottles. One of the worst things about life in this nation is not Watergate, not Coca-Cola, but this very same matter of bottle tops. Almost everything with a screw-on lid is sold with the lid so firmly fastened that I find ridges on my palms an hour after I've finally managed to succeed with the canopener. Even worse is the drugstore situation. Most things like aspirin, cold tablets, and prescriptions are sold in little bottles with childproof tops. The intent is to prevent small children from opening them and swallowing dangerous quantities. But I suspect





that for every child's life that is saved three adults die of strokes or heart attacks while trying to follow successfully the instructions printed on the bottles for opening them. I narrowly escaped real injury one night when a plastic bottle of drain opener split down one side while I was trying to unlock the cap. By some miracle, it splashed the other way and took off the top layer of wood on a piece of furniture instead of a square foot or two of my flesh.

I hope you'll be able to continue publication and that eventually you'll become famous as the pioneer who caused Wales to become the source of dozens of superb fanzines created by new fans who followed your example.

((Gosh! First Bryn Fortey and now you. All this flattery could turn a young boy's head. As it happens, Harry, I don't think the pioneer label would stick because Wales has already produced fans of the calibre of Dave Langford, Greg Pickersgill, and, of course, the estimable Mr. Fortey himself. Nice thought, tho'.))

MIKE GLICKSOHN...

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

Thanks for sending me your first issue but I'm afraid there isn't a lot I can say about it. Your artwork has the occasional tendency to look a little comic bookish...

((Agreed. Quite a few people have said as much. Since I taught myself to draw by copying the artwork of the Marvel artists its hardly surprising.))

...with poor perspectives and somewhat sloppy anatomy but you clearly have ability in that area. As for the writing, well it just fails to contain many comment hooks, I'm afraid. I couldn't help but wonder why you chose that odd spacing though? There's really nothing wrong with ordinary single spacing and it gets you that many more words per page. Illustrated vignettes or comic strips or graphic extravaganzas or any other name you might put to them definitely have a future in fanzines if they show skill and imagination. I found myself sufficiently intrigued by the artistic tricks in this one to enjoy it despite the highly improbable storyline. By all means keep it up.

It's always hard to comment on conreports, especially if you weren't there yourself and the report is a fairly factual account of what happened to the writer. I'm delighted, though, that smaller relax-cons are catching on in England. By far the best cons on the North American circuit are the small, fannish, mainly unprogrammed social cons.

Over here using "paki" is generally considered boorish: do you also refer to "kikes", "wops", and "niggers" in your writing as well?

Yours, etc.,  
Mike...

((I used the term 'paki' as an abbreviation, much as I use Scot as an abbreviation for Scotsman. I don't profess to know what a kike is but I do, however, know what a nigger is and I know, as I'm sure you do, the racist overtones the term carries and I resent the implication behind your suggestion that I use the term.))

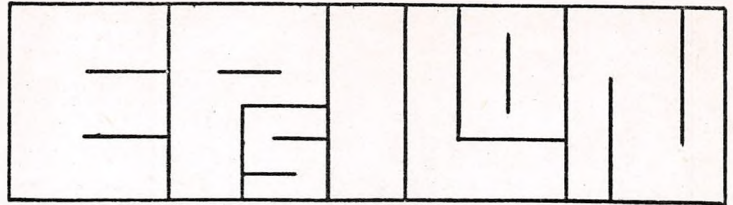
And on that somewhat unpalatable note the letters page on EPSILON is brought to a close and it only remains for me to say...

WAHF: Pete Presford, Bryn Fortey and Joseph Nicholas.

Hopefully this fanzine will evoke a larger response from the great apathetic entity we call fandom. I hope so. Next issue out whenever....

APOLOGY:-

THIS ISSUE WAS GOING TO BE LITHO BUT PRICE QUOTED WAS BEYOND MY POCKET.



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true confessions from Paul Kincaid.

LETTERS.....page 7.  
the Gospel according to St. Mike Glicksohn.

Illoes not by me: Anon.....page 3.  
Harry Bell.....page 7.  
(caption by Rob Jackson)

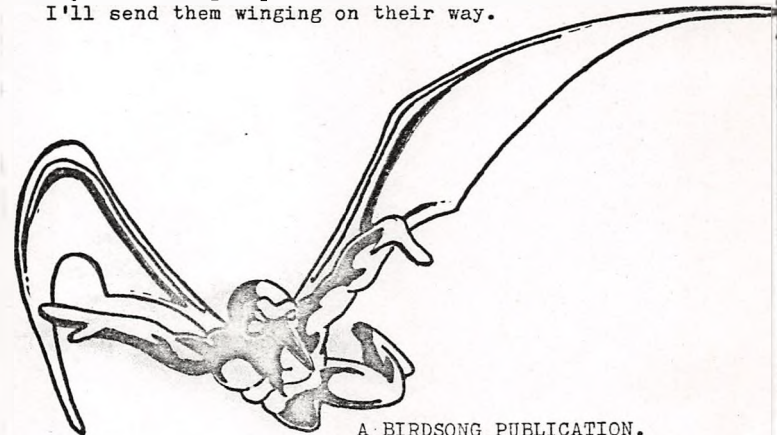
My second issue, gosh wow. Since, proportionately, response from North America was pretty good I'll most probably be sending a few more copies winging their way in that direction, which could explain why you're reading this now. Selection will be random, how else?

As you've probably noticed this issue is almost totally composed of reportage of the social side of fandom, something I like doing, which is of obvious interest to Britfandom but what about the rest of you? Conceivably this type of thing will be of interest to fans of English fandom, such as Mike Glicksohn, and of greater interest to fans of British fandom, but then again I don't know. Let me know, OK? OK.

EPSILON 2. came to you from:

Rob Hansen  
51 Bryn-y-Nant  
Llanedeyrn  
Cardiff CF3 7PA  
WALES  
United Kingdom.

Anyone wanting copies of EPSILON 1. let me know and I'll send them winging on their way.



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