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first a *flash* NEWSBREAK.

FIRST DRAFT #151

Vol. 26, No. 1

3 Feb 67

"New Edition About Hobbits

"Admirers of hobbits, the ancient, small people that J.R.R. Tolkien created, will be treated to a new edition of "The Lord of the Rings," his three-volume epic. The edition contains a new foreword, new appendices and an index." -- NYTimes, 3 Feb 67, p. 29 ("Books--Authors" section). Now wot is going on? It was my distinct impression that Tolkien was going at what for him is a break-neck pace, completing the SILMARILLION. Is he back at revising LotR again? And whoinell is publishing it? *sigh* That's *NEWSBREAKS* for this issue...

NYCON COMICS hit the spot...

NYCON PROGRESS REPORT PROGRESS REPORT DEPT: I've just typed up the roster of names-and-numbers of NYCon III members thru January, and there's 369 paid members. In addition, there are 20 special Committee and GoH numbers, for a total of 389. Almost 400, and there's still seven months to go till the con. I understand from Ted that there's some 11½ pages of ads for the second Progress Report, which is scheduled for 20 pages. Things seem to be progressing nicely. I wonder what's going to go wrong...

RECENT VISITS FROM ALAN SHAW DEPT: Alan Shaw just stopped into the office in the middle of the last paragraph, and attempted to interpolate 3 or 4 lines in it. I am, however, a master with correction fluid if I do say it that shouldn't, so you will Never Know what he wrote there.

Then we talked of deep intellectual subjects for fifteen minutes or so. I averred that even Murray "the K" was easy to take, compared with Roscoe. (These are the early and late evening DJs at WOR-FM, for the benefit of West Coasters in the audience; East Coast intellectuals are of course already hip to all this.) Whereupon Alan informed me that there's a station up in Boston where the DJ is a computer.

Tossing Alan's battered bleeding body down the airshaft, I returned to contemplating the Beauties of popular music and culture.

As a matter of fact, tho I'm basically a classical (but not baroque) music lover, I have always found a certain percentage of popular music to be possessed of genuine musical (and even, occasionally, poetic) beauty. A very small percentage, of course; most popular music is purely and simply swill, and how so many people can stand to have this musical drool poured in their ears for hours on end with no interruption, save for the insertion of more change or the babbling moronicisms of some professional cretin who has been hired on because he possesses a loud voice and a religious conviction that his audience has the intellectual capacity, by and large, of a beheaded orangoutang, exceeds my understanding. Most popular music -- whether sung by a Sinatra or an r&r group, or whoever -- sounds as if it had been written by criminals to be sung by jackals to a crowd of lobotomized elephants in permanent heat.

But somehow this vile, perverted, quintessentially schlock industry manages to produce an occasional item I can stand to hear more than once. If every other singer, tunesmith, dj, & r&r band were taken out

and summarily shot, it could only improve the general health of the nation, but a Donovan, a Dylan, a handful of tracks from miscellaneous albums, almost makes up for the rest of the putrescence. In fact, what with the Beatles and everything that has come after them in the tradition, as it were, that they established, it wd almost be conceivable to me that pop music is finally on the way up out of the hog wallow it has been content to muck around in from the beginning.

But half an hour of listening to the WMCA "Good" Guys, and my cynicism returns in full force.

I see that I have occasionally utilized images based on sex in my scourging of the depravity inherent in the greatest part of pop music, and I shd not like to be misunderstood on this. I don't mind if the songs are dirty -- such an element adds at least a slight tang of palatability to otherwise revolting material, whether we are talking of music, movies, ads, books, or whatever. And if the playing of these songs in any way tends to lead to more sexual activity, well, we've got the pill now... No, my objections, tho based on moral grounds, are not sexually moral. What I have strenuously protested since first exposed to it rather too many years ago, is the cacophony of screeching, howling, shouting, vapid crap, from the trash that Frank Sinatra "stylizes" (yes, and my beloved Judy Garland mostly sings pure junk too) to the grating discordancies of the Supremes (years ago I used to hate the Hi-Lo's the way I dislike the Supremes now; the slight modification in my attitude is strictly due to my growing Old And Tired and Beaten Into The Ground by all this noise).

Still -- and all this stuff shd have been headed to TED WHITE rather than to the Late Alan Shaw -- there are good things available, and when I finally buy a hifi stereo I will no doubt step over to Ted's and obtain his advice on the best three dozen or so albums. I'll just have to remember to substitute something by Mingus for every Supremes job he recommends.

Now, if I cd just foist Nielson, Sibelius, G&S, d'Indy, Prokofief, Mahler, Ives, Schumann, Brahms, and the rest of the long long list, onto Ted, I'd feel like there was still some chance to keep the universe in balance...

SMALL CHANGE DEPT: Last week Cindy & I went out to spend the advance from the LOST IN SPACE novelization, and after a day of miscellaneous purchases (we blew a big \$15 or \$20 at most, I'd bet), we ended up trying to decide whether to buy me a pair of ripple-sole shoes (such as I have worn for half a decade and which I feel are Ultimately Comfortable) or a pair of hiphugger pants, we finally compromised.

We bought a piano.

I guess I shd just stop right there, but it's a beautiful spinet (a Winter) and it deserves more than a throwaway line. I don't expect to be able to get back any of my once-upon-a-time facility at the keyboard for some time, but I've bought some books of exercises, and intend to plug away until Cindy and the cats are driven dippy.

Then I plan to become a world-famous composer. Hoping you are the sane...

-- dgv