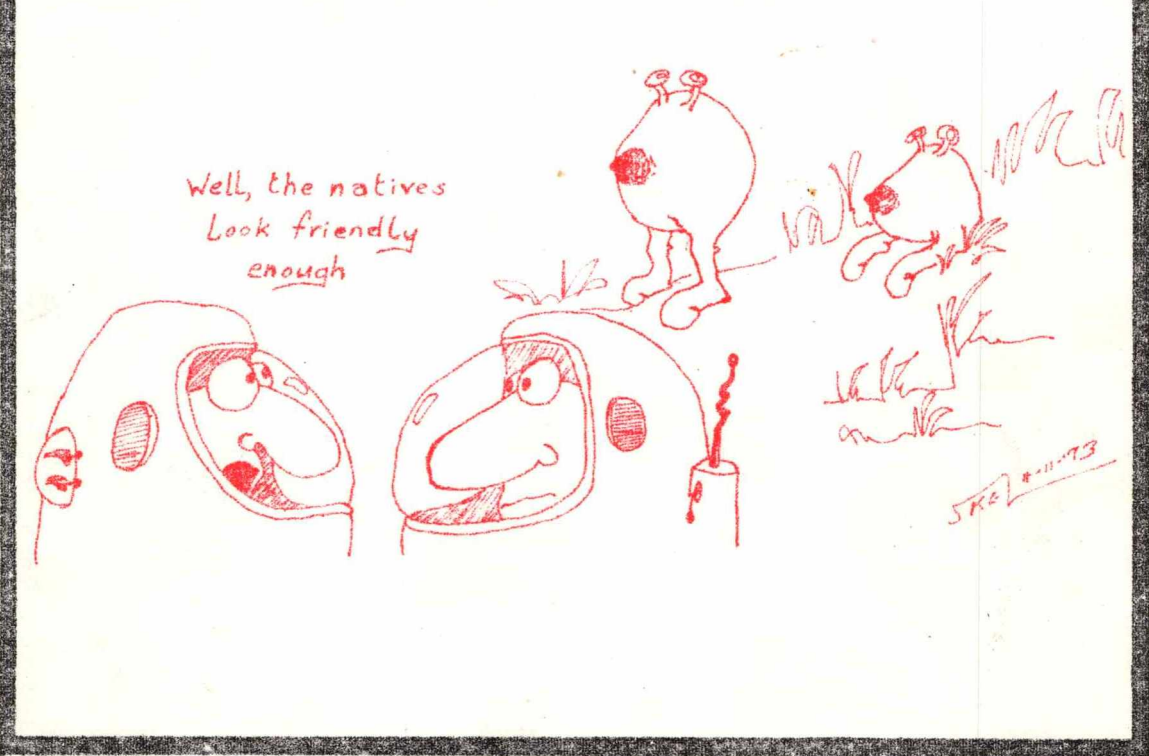


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# KNOCHERS FROM NEPTUNE



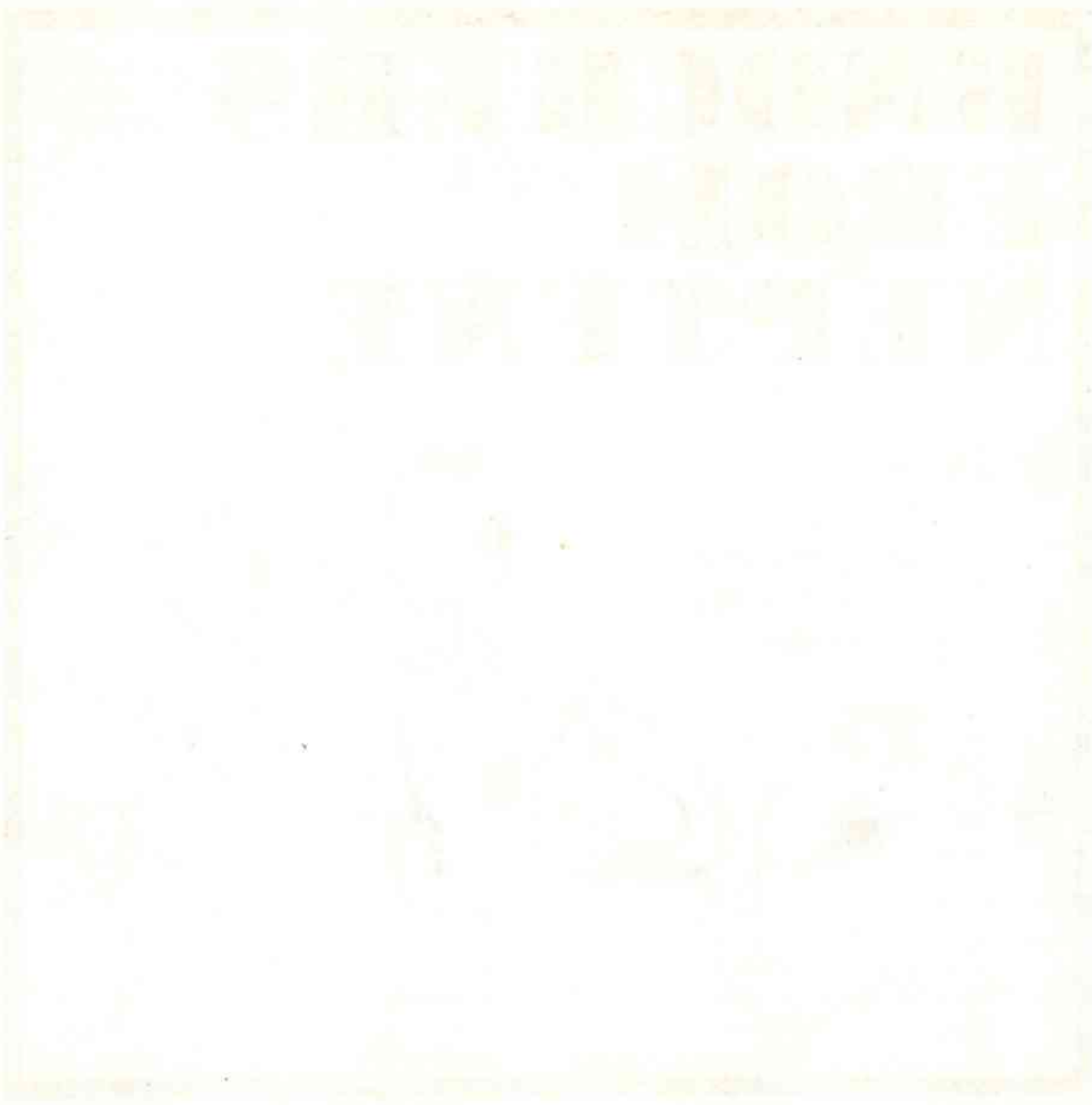
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As a special introductory offer with the first issue of this new publication, Polecat Publications Inc. have obtained a limited number of genuine, guaranteed perfect Mk. III Reality Testers, made by Verirubishi Ltd. of Japan.

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE!**

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE!**



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READERS GUYED

KNOCKERS FROM NEPTUNE 1 is, believe it or not, the first issue of a new publishing venture from Polecat Publications, last heard of c/o Mike and Pat Meara, 61 Borrowash Road, Spondon, Derby, DE2 7QH, England, previous publishers of LURK and other, lesser-known efforts. It is dated July, 1975. It is available for (preferably) substantial letters, not necessarily of comment, and nearly all fanzines will be accepted in all-for-all trade. Contributions may be accepted, but write first. Also available for old fanzines, and dollar bills (\$1 per copy), but no other currency is acceptable. It is POLECAT PUBLICATION number 11.

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The sources of the topline quotes this issue are:

pp1-2: Ed Cagle in KWALHIOQUA  
p3: A rag magazine  
pp4-42: HYPHEN.

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LETTERS:

Geoff Bateman - p11; Sheryl Birkhead - p36; Pamela Boal - p14; Ian Butterworth - p19; Gil Gaier - p40; Mike Glicksohn - p33; Paul Hudson - p10; Terry Jeeves\* - p11; Sam Long - p39; Jim Meadows III - p32; Dave Rowe - p15; Paul Skelton - p20; Alan Stewart - p19.

\* indicates a precis rather than direct quotes.

FANZINES:

CONTACT 1: Graham Poole, 23 Russet Rd., Cheltenham, Glos. GL51 7LN. p3  
CYNIC 8: Gray Boak, 2 Cecil Court, Cecil St., Lytham, Lancs. FY8 5NN. p38  
DEVILS REVIEW 1: Buck Coulson, Route 3, Hartford City, IN 47348. p6  
DYNATRON 61: Roy Tackett, 915 Green Valley Rd. NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107 p2  
EGG 9: Peter Roberts, Flat 4, 6 Westbourne Park Villas, London W2. p3  
ERG 51: Terry Jeeves, 230 Bannerdale Road, Sheffield S11 9FE. p41  
FANZINE FANATIQUE 8: Keith Walker, 2 Daisy Bank, Quernmore Rd., Lancas- p12  
FANZINE FANATIQUE 9: As above. ter. p32  
FIRST DRAFT 1: John Bangsund, P.O. Box 357, Kingston ACT2604, Australia p5  
FORERUNNER 35: Sue Clarke, 32 Spurwood Rd., Warrimoo, NSW2775 Australia p2  
GEGENSCHWEIN 20: 6 Hillcrest Ave., Faulconbridge, NSW2776, Australia p2  
GLIMPSE 2: Paul Hudson, 102 Valley Rd., Rickmansworth, Herts. p40  
GRIMLING BOSCH 3: Harry Bell, 9 Lincoln St., Gateshead, Tyne & Wear p41  
INFERNO 8: Paul & Gas Skelton, 25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport p41  
LOCUS 172: Dena & Charlie Brown, 34 Ridgewood Lane, Oakland, CA 94119 p6  
LUDD'S MILL: Andy Darlington, 44 Spa Croft Rd., Teall St., Ossett, Yorkshire p6  
WF5 OHE  
MALFUNCTION 7: Pete Presford, 10 Dalkeith Rd., South Reddish, Stockport p32  
MOEBIUS TREP 22: Ed Connor, 1805 N. Gale, Peoria, IL 61604 p36  
MOTA 9: Terry Hughes, 866 N. Frederick St., Arlington, Virginia 22205 p2  
MOTA 10: As above. p18  
PARKER'S PATCH 1: Brian Parker, Flat 2, 11 Fairfield Rd., Bradford 8 p3  
PHILOSOPHICAL GAS 29/NEW MILLENNIAL HARBINGER 14: John Bangsund p6  
PHILOSOPHICAL GAS 30: John Bangsund (address above) p41  
PHOSPHENE 1: Gil Gaier, 1016 Beech Ave., Torrance, CA 90501 p8



PROFANITY 8: Bruce Pelz, 15931 Kalisher St., Granada Hills, CA 91344 p18  
 PROFANITY 9: As above. p40  
 SF INTERNATIONAL NEWS 1: Keith Freeman & Dave Kyle, 128 Fairford Rd., Tile-  
 hurst, Reading, RG3 6QP 53703 p33  
 STARLING 30: Hank & Lesleigh Luttrell, 525 W. Main, Madison, Wisconsin p3  
 TRICODE 21: Eric Bentcliffe, 17 Riverside Crescent, Holmes Chapel, Ches. p36

BOOKS:

Poul Anderson - THREE HEARTS & THREE LIONS (Avon)	Novel	56	p7
Piers Anthony - RACE AGAINST TIME* (Sidgwick & Jackson)	Novel	55	p23
Christopher Anvil - STRANGERS IN PARADISE (Tower)	Novel	25	p7
Isaac Asimov - FOUNDATION TRILOGY (Panther)	Novel	58	p29
Brian Ball - PLANET PROBABILITY* (Sidgwick & Jackson)	Novel	35	p13
Brian Ball - SINGULARITY STATION* (Sidgwick & Jackson)	Novel	35	p23
J. G. Ballard - THE VOICES OF TIME (Berkley)	Collection	76	p30
Alfred Bester - THE DARK SIDE OF THE EARTH (Pan)	Collection	88	p42
John Boyd - THE RAKEHELLS OF HEAVEN* (Pan)	Novel	75	p24
Louis Charbonneau - CORPUS EARTHLING (Zenith)	Novel	32	p6
Thomas M. Disch - THE GENOCIDES (Panther)	Novel	77	p13
John Faucette - THE WARRIORS OF TERRA (Belmont)	Novel	25	p23
Randall Garrett - ANYTHING YOU CAN DO... (Mayflower)	Novel	65	p23
Stuart Gordon - ONE-EYE* (Sidgwick & Jackson)	Novel	35	p29
Colin Kapp - THE PATTERNS OF CHAOS* (Panther)	Novel	55	p13
Harvard Lampoon - BORED OF THE RINGS (Signet)	Novel	54	p13
Edward Andrew Mann - THE PORTALS* (Sidgwick & Jackson)	Novel	53	p42
J. T. McIntosh - BORN LEADER (Corgi)	Novel	76	p29
Ward Moore & Avram Davidson - JOYLEG (Pyramid)	Novel	77	p42
Edgar Pangborn - DAVY (Penguin)	Novel	88	p42
John Rankine - OPERATION UMANAQ* (Sidgwick & Jackson)	Novel	32	p42
James H. Schmitz - THE ETERNAL FRONTIERS* (Sidgwick & J)	Novel	32	p30
Robert Wells - THE PARASAURIANS* (Sidgwick & Jackson)	Novel	32	p23
Kate Wilhelm - LET THE FIRE FALL (Panther)	Novel	78	p30
Jack Williamson - THE NOT-MEN (Tower?)	Novel	32	p7
Jack Williamson - THE REIGN OF WIZARDRY (Lancer)	Novel	52	p13
Patrick Wyatt - IRISH ROSE* (Michael Joseph)	Novel	65	p7

Books marked \* were sent for review.

The two-digit code refers to Gil Gaier's rating system.

RECORDS:

Dave Peabody - KEEP IT CLEAN (Matchbox SDM 261) p4

Hardly worth it, was it? More next time, maybe.

FILMS:

None at all. There's been nothing but crap showing locally these past few months. Must get to see MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL, though.

ARTWORK: Front cover and p24 by Skel. Back cover by Dave Piper.

Going out with the next issue will be a joint Skelton/Meara one-shot. Traditionally, this sort of thing doesn't get much response, but if you're interested, please let us know, as circulation will be rather limited.

"On the Train of Thought, 99% of the tickets sold are half fare." (Ed Cagle)

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15 April 75

last! The final stencil of LURK 7 had been completed; the Faned had yawned, stretched, kicked his wife up the arse and gone to bed; and the whole house was as quiet as a mouse.....

SO WHO THE HELL'S TYPING THIS LOAD OF GARBAGE, THEN??

We shall never know.

Contrary to any rumours you may have heard, this is the very first page of the very first issue of KNOCKERS FROM NEPTUNE, coming to you from the Old Firm (and I shall leave it to you to guess who is Old and who is Firm). Perhaps I should say, without further ado, that unless otherwise stated it is Mike who is the author of whichever bit of immortal drivel you happen to have your eye on at the moment, though I hope to persuade my dear wife (better known as "Hey, you!") to say a few words, even if it's only "sod you, I'm off to bed!"

Go on then - ask me. I bet you're simply dying to know. WHY that title?

Okay then I'll tell you. I, like Dave Piper, have a job which can, on occasions, be rather tedious. 'Twas on one such occasion of high-powered inertia that I and some others were mooching about the lab, trying to think of something destructive to do. Suddenly Doug, whose taste in reading matter extends about as far as "Hot Car" magazine, and who knew of my habit of always carrying an sf book around in my jacket pocket, decided to have some fun at my expense: "What have you got today then, Mike?" he asked; "'Knockers From Neptune'?"

I laughed. That was pretty good for half past three on a Monday afternoon. (See how clearly I remember it?) And then of course, as morons will, we set our brain (that's right, we share one) to work thinking of others in similar vein. Like PERVERTS FROM PLUTO. Or TETTIES FROM TITAN. Or GONADS FROM GANYMEDE. Or SADISTS FROM SATURN. Or JACKALFUCKERS FROM JUPITER (it was getting difficult by this time. Not to mention boring). Or UROLAGNIACS FROM URANUS. (That one took ages. Even now I'm not sure that's the right noun.)

So naturally, when I got around to thinking about doing a personalzine, and thinking of a title for it, just naturally I recalled that occasion. And I decided that, as is often the case, the first idea was the best.

16 April 75

So what can you expect to find within these hollowed pages? Nothing very deep, certainly - it's only a shallow hollow, you see. If people (and that could include you) send us letters, we'll probably print bits of them, along with our own comments - just like the LURK lettercol used to be, in fact. Fanzines received will be chatted about rather than reviewed. We might also include something about the books we read, films we see, records we buy, and of course



"If none of this makes sense, try singing it." (Ed Cagle)

===+===

any fannish gatherings we may get involved in. And all in this diary-type format, the idea being that every three months we round the thing off to an even number of pages, stick some sort of index or reader's guide on at the end, collate it and mail it out. Running off the stencils in pairs as they're completed should help to lighten the duplicating workload; the reason why LURK often seemed a bit of a chore was that I'd invariably find myself with thirty-odd stencils to type and run off, all at one go. I could never get into doing a few stencils at a time, and I couldn't avoid having to run all the stencils off at once anyway, since I never used to know how an issue was going to look until it was all typed up. This new system should make things easier. Should. We'll have to see. I promise nothing.

Pat says the real reason I chose the title was because I've got a breast fixation. It's a lie. I've had that operation - I'm all cured I tell you!! Well, my hand is anyway; Pat's always saying how ham-fisted I am.

Let's talk about fanzines. As I might have known, as soon as I'd put the finishing touches to LURK 7's fanzine review section, fanzines started coming through the door (via the letter-box, you understand; I wouldn't want you to get any funny ideas about my door) with the speed and regularity of....of....um....fanzines coming through a door? Never mind. I have here before me Terry Hughes' MOTA 9, wherein Gary Hubbard, who is a paint salesman and embarrassed with it, describes how he filled in the "occupation" slot in a magazine renewal form by describing himself as a writer of pronographic novels. Damn, I thought: at last, the Real Thing. No more of this fake amateur nography. Now we're gonna get the Word from a real professional. No such luck. Turns out he was really on about dull boring old pornography. Damn you and your typos, Hughes. Just when I thought a Great Truth was about to be revealed. Apart from that, a fine issue, with all sorts of interesting stuff about Space Gophers and suchlike. Like the man says, a really educational fanzine.

Sue Clarke has become the editor of FORERUNNER, the zine of the Sydney SF Foundation. Number 35 is fairly lightweight, in size and content. Note the new address: 32 Spurwood Road, Warrimoo, NSW 2775.

Thank you, Roy and Eric, for having enough faith to keep pestering me with issues of DYNATRON and GEGENSCHNEIN. Mostly I enjoy 'em, but sad to say I can't find much that I like in your latest offerings. An article on Franz Kafka and a review of Weird Tales for March 1948 are not best calculated to fill my fannish soul with joy. It was nice, though, to read that Jackie Franke likes to read sf for the plot. Me too. In fact, there are a few plot-themes that I tend to go for, even if the writing and everything else looks pretty bad. I call these my sucker-plots. There's the contact-with-aliens-and-solution-of-associated-mystery type of plot, exemplified by James White's ALL JUDGEMENT FLED; then there's the dying-Earth type, Jack Vance's stories under that title and Brian Aldiss' HOTOHOUSE coming to mind; and the robots-going-slightly-wrong idea, as in the work of Phil Dick and Ron Goulart. There are several more, some of them more difficult to pin down. Don't get me wrong - I read sf for other things too. I wish you'd stick to one format for GEG, Eric; these occasional issues in different sizes could confuse a stupid person. I liked

Heisenberg probably rules, OK.

\*\*\*+\*\*\*

Shayne McCormack's Discon report in 20; despite being a "first I did, then I met" type, it succeeds because it's so full of people. You must be really desperate for material to publish some of this stuff, though. Why not write more yourself? Or just wait until something good comes in?

CONTACT 1 from Graham Poole is all BSFA news and business. You don't give up, do you Graham? According to the circulation list I'm still a council member; I thought I'd have been kicked out after refusing to attend the meeting at Seacon. I reckon the BSFA's best bet, if it's determined to keep going, is to set itself up as a sort of information clearing-house for neos; somewhere they can find information about fan groups, sf discussion groups, new and second-hand sf dealers; sercon and fannish fanzines and where to get them - that sort of thing. Then once they've got the information they require, the neos can set about making their own way in fandom. That way, two or three people at the most would be needed to run a modest organisation, and there'd be no need for VECTOR or a Council or any of that stuff.

17 April 75

I enjoyed PARKER'S PATCH, Brian, although the humour came across as being a bit self-conscious in places. There were some lovely touches though (apart from Sheila Holdstock and Ewa). I see it's everybody-say-something-nasty-about-Malcolm-Edwards month, which brings to mind a photo I took at Seacon, of Harry Harrison expounding on "Soylent Green"; sitting on the platform, gazing raptly at Our Hero, with a quite remarkable "my-hero" expression on his face, is Mal himself. Definitely one for a photomontage, should I ever decide to do one.

EGG 9 arrived with a picture of someone's anus on the front. Okay if you like that sort of thing, I suppose. I see that your opinion of how to reorganise the BSFA is extremely similar to my own wafflings higher up this very page. How embarrassing! People will think I read EGG first, then pinched your ideas to write the relevant paragraph, then wrote this bit about how surprised I was to see etc. etc. It's cruel how Mate can play tricks on you, ain't it, Pete? Pass me that bottle of anti-paranoia pills, somebody.

Another faithful tradezine is STARLING, the thirtieth issue of which arrived yesterday. A very sercon issue in its way, entirely taken up with comics, cartoons and music, apart from an sf book review section. Even the lettercol is taken up with the same subjects. Okay by me, since I'm nuts about cartoons, like most styles of music, and have a marginal interest in comics, particularly comic-strips. The whole zine looks fannish, but ain't. Funny. I agree with you, Hank, about the great decline in the quality of recent cartoons. All the new ones I've seen over here, which I presume are American imports that you were seeing two or three years ago, are pathetic efforts, mostly devoid of the slightest trace of inspiration or wit. A recent Hanna-Barbera effort I saw was so appalling I can't even remember what it was about. A far cry from the days of Yogi Bear and Huckleberry Hound - and even they were nothing extra-special. My favourites are, in no particular order; Tom and Jerry; the Pink Panther; the Road Runner; Sylvester and Tweetie-Pie; and a series of 25-minute programmes along the lines of the Bugs Bunny Show: there was an Aesop's Fable, I remember,



"It may be that writing is a form of ego-gratification and catharsis....

====+====

and something with a moose in it (Bullmoose I think it was called), and somebody called Peabody who had adventures in the past by means of a Way-back Machine. And there was an incomprehensible serial which always seemed to be up to part 39 or thereabouts. As you can see, my memories of the whole thing are a little hazy, but I do remember that it seemed very different from the usual run of cartoons at that time. Does anyone else remember this series? And can they tell me anything more about it?

Tuesday 22nd. April

There - a change of policy already. I decided it was more sensible to put in what day it was, and miss out the year.

The slight hiatus was caused by two things: a visit to me Mum in Hull over the weekend, followed by running off LURK 7, which I completed tonight. Next comes the collating - \*grump\*.

Apart from the filial joy of seeing me old mater every now and again, I always enjoy visiting my home-town because it's one of the best hunting-grounds I know of, outside London, for secondhand books and records; there are at least six good shops dealing in one or the other, or both, including one that sells new imported sf as well. On visiting this latter establishment, I was pleased, but surprised, to be able to pick up a dozen or so books for my collection, none of which I'd seen on any dealer's list. The prize item was Goulart's SHAGGY PLANET, which must be getting a bit rare since Lancer, the publishers, went bust.

I was also able to trade in some dull, boring, fuddy-duddy LPs against some dynamic, trendy, un-fuddy-duddy ones, like "Al Capone's Greatest Hits", or "Val Doonican Plays Django Reinhardt", or "Edward Heath Plays With Himself - And Loses". Ah, would that it were so. One LP I did find, though, is called "Keep It Clean" by Dave Peabody (Matchbox SDM 261). It's subtitled "Goodtime, Ragtime, Stomps and Blues", which about sums it up. Now, despite never having heard of this geezer before, I bought the LP because I was pretty sure I'd be onto a good thing. As it turns out, none of the participants are particularly talented (with the exception of Andy Leggett of the Pigsty Hill Light Orchestra, who plays some of the meanest jug I've ever heard - watch out, Howie Rosenblum!). Not to worry. I've never lost my fascination for this type of music, despite its rather limited format, even if the performers are a bit mediocre. Talking of mediocrity, a year or two ago a group of us who liked to pretend we could play the guitar used to get together every now and again to get pissed and have a bit of a twang. Since none of us could be bothered to work out any arrangements of anything, sooner or later we'd wind up ~~play-~~ing the blues, if only because it was so simple even we could follow it. Usually it was a case of "jump in when you can, carry on until the rhythm man's hand gets tired, then try to finish together". Very occasionally, for just a few bars things would click, and you could feel the charge in the atmosphere as everybody really got into it; inevitably, incompetence won out in the end, and the whole thing would fall apart again. I wonder if that same feeling, on a somewhat higher level of talent, is responsible for the appearance of LPs



....but so is a laxative tablet with your name printed on one side."

==+==

like this from the smaller record companies?

Wednesday 23rd. April

Having partaken somewhat of the alcoholic beverages, I now feel in the mood for a bit of typing. So if the following is a bit incoherent, don't blame me, blame the Guinness and Bon-Sol Bianco Verano. (A foul mixture - I anticipate a severe hangover on the morrow.)

However, on to Certain Things; the first item of note is this bit in the Berby Evening Telegraph of Monday 21st. April: "Praise for worker in brave bid to stop acid leak" says the headline. Apparently, Mr. John Iwanciw (47), a worker at British Celanese (where I also work) received burns to his hands and face in his attempt to hold back a leak in a pipe. After complimenting him on his bravery, a Celanese official said: "It is not likely to affect production to any serious extent". I'm glad to see they've got the whole thing in perspective; I mean, you've got to realise just how important Production is. I wonder how much Production would have been lost if Mr. Iwanciw had said "Sod you, I'm getting out of here". I wonder if the British Celanese management have thought of that. And I wonder if they considered the possibility of financial compensation. Knowing what I do about that particular plant, I think Mr. Iwanciw did more than could be expected of him, to say the least.

I've been reading quite a lot recently about how poor old Hugo Gernsback really ruined sf by starting off a magazine specialising in the genre. It's rather neatly summed up in this quote from Richard Lupoff's book review column in ALGOL 20:

"It's a strange notion to consider, but it seems increasingly likely that the whole Gernsback-magazine era of science fiction was a passing aberration from which we are only now recovering."

I tend to agree, I suppose. But where does that leave all those luvverly magazines? Why do I get all excited when I find a mint copy of ROCKET STORIES, July 1953, containing a "complete novel", "Blood on my Jets" by Algis Budrys, for only 50p? It looks a rubbish story; it probably is a rubbish story; so why do I bother collecting? I wish I knew. If only I could rationalise this urge out of my system, I'd save myself a lot of money.

A coupla fanzines arrived since I last mentioned that subject; FIRST DRAFT 1, from John Bangsund, seems like a personalzine in the style of some of his other publications like PHILOSOPHICAL GAS. In this issue he concentrates on the opposition of the Australian press to their Premier, Gough Whitlam. Not something I'd ordinarily be too keen on, but Bangsund makes it a bit special. I might as well mention that "The University of Ard-Knox and Other Improbabilities", a 75,000 word collection of John's writings, will be published during 1975 at A\$5.00, however much that is. Damn these Australians. Why can't they use & like civilised people?

Ah, the last line of a stencil, how poignant. Another page gone, never to be r

"Where is Grinding Halt, anyway?"

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Friday 25th. April

More fanzines: DEVLINS REVIEW 1 from the Coulsons is a fanzine reviewzine, an attempt to catch up on the backlog of zines received prior to giving up reading fanzines, or most of them, and reviewing them too. Buck says he'll still trade YANDRO with a very few zines. I doubt if this would be among them. Ah well, another name off the mailing list.

LOCUS 172 is devoted to the Locus Poll, which with 516 ballots this year is probably the most representative of all the poll/awards, as Charlie points out. There are all the usual "best" categories, but more interesting to me was the "All Time Best Novel" section; the "winner" was DUNE, which I haven't read yet, but quite a few of my favourites are placed. CHILDHOOD'S END second, the FOUNDATION trilogy sixth, MISSION OF GRAVITY sixteenth, THE CITY AND THE STARS seventeenth, THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES twenty-fourth and FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON thirty-sixth. Authors like Anderson, Harrison, De Camp and Aldiss are conspicuous by their absence; I'd rate BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO, LEST DARKNESS FALL and HOTHOUSE among my favourites too. No mention of EFR's NEXT OF KIN, MacDonald's THE GIRL, THE GOLD WATCH AND EVERYTHING or James White's ALL JUDGEMENT FLED either. I'm not sure how one would judge a novel as being "best". All I know is that all the above gave me a great deal of enjoyment, in various ways, which is what I read sf for anyway.

John Bangsund's PHILOSOPHICAL GAS 29 and THE NEW MILLENNIAL HARBINGER 14 arrived stapled together as one zine. And guess what? John's changing the title of his FIRST DRAFT to.....PHILOSOPHICAL GAS!! Well done, John. I'm glad to see that you too have the occasional brainstorm, like everybody else. Another brainstorm was the inclusion of that ghastly piece of fiction, "Coming Race", which spoils an otherwise interesting and good issue.

Andy Darlington sent a note enquiring after the fortunes of LURK. He enclosed the latest LUDD'S MILL (number 10), the main feature of which is a long feature on Timothy Leary, which I may comment on after I've read and digested it. There's also a fine piece of fiction, "Non-Combatant" by Alex Kernaghan.

Sunday 27th. April

Okay, here's where I carry on a bit about the books I've been reading recently. Because I'm such a literary philistine, you'll find they're nearly all sf. I'm not going to review the books, merely make a few comments, which is about as subjective as you can get. To get anything out of what follows, you'll have to know about me, in which respect the rest of the zine may help, eventually:

Louis Charbonneau's CORPUS EARTHLING is mediocre stuff about Martian life-forms returning to Earth aboard an Earth-Mars expedition rocket and taking over the bodies of humans to plan their invasion of Earth. It's not just the covers that are cardboard; you may also include the characters and the plot. There are also plenty of thrusting breasts, curving thighs and clinging dresses, but I can't really say they turned me on much. \*S n o r e\*



"He considers himself a keen judge of whoresflesh"

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I found Poul Anderson's THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS somewhat better, to say the least. Despite the hoary old gimmick whereby the Hero is sent into the alternate world by means of some violent happening (in this case his scalp is creased by a bullet) I found this a most enjoyable fantasy with good characterisation, although it stops rather unexpectedly.

"Patrick Wyatt", according to the blurb, is a pseudonym for a writer of sf and children's stories, educated at Oxford but now living abroad. Wonder who it could be? The book is set in a future where unsuspected side-effects of contraceptive pills have greatly reduced the number of fertile women, so much so that interbreeding of races becomes the norm, of necessity. Thus everyone is now a pale brown colour, and women dominate the social setup in various ways in different parts of the world. The Irish Rose herself is a genetic freak, a white girl with blonde hair, and her involvement in the plan to restore a new and better Golden Age is the subject-matter of the book.

I found a lot in this book. To me it was a religious allegory, though others may read it differently. It is not a children's book, despite the very simple style in which it is written. But how Michael Joseph can justify a price of £3.75 for IRISH ROSE, I'm not sure. Recommended, though, if you can find it cheap.

Jack Williamson's THE NOT-MEN is not-verygood. In fact it's not-worthreading. Fred Hemmings assures me that Williamson has written something worthwhile; this isn't it. However, I'll be reading the SEETEE books shortly, for the first time, and they're supposed to be classics.

Christopher Anvil's STRANGERS IN PARADISE is even worse; it's carelessly written, with no attempt to make the plot believable, and it exhibits a disregard for human feeling which is quite appalling. Absolute garbage. Definitely the worst book I've read this year. And I didn't like it much, either.

Two goodies and three baddies. That's not a bad average these days. Maybe I'm losing my sense of wonder or something.

Wednesday 30th. April

As Pat and I were lying in bed the other night, waiting for something to happen, all of a sudden I had this Strange Idea. (I was going to call it a Great Inspiration, but on reflection it was more of a Strange Idea). It occurred to me what a great part cheese could have played in science fiction, if only a few authors had been alive to the possibilities. Just think what a better book Mark Clifton could have written if he'd called it EIGHT KEYS TO EDAM, for instance. For want of anything better to do I mentioned this Idea to Pat; she seemed quite interested and enthusiastic. (Well, anything's better than position 73 again). So we spent the next few minutes thinking of other great sf novels that could have been, like Clifford Simak's WHEY STATION for instance, or Frank Herbert's THE GOUDAMAKERS, not to mention Van Vogt's THE CHEESE SHOPS OF ISHER or Heinlein's DOUBLE GLOUCESTER, or John D. MacDonald's classic THE GIRL, THE GOLD WATCH, THE RATHER MOULDY CHUNK OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN GORGON-

"She has all the coy charm of a cow elephant in heat"

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ZOLA AND EVERYTHING\* Then of course there could have been Aldiss' definitive history of the whole phenomenon, THE BILLION-YEAR BRIE.

Inspiration then began to run a bit thin; frenzied thought produced two rather mediocre ones, McIntosh's SIX GATES FROM FINBO and Alan E. Nourse's ROCKET TO LIMBERGER. Further frenzied thought produced nothing at all, at which point you might have expected me either to go to sleep or get on to something more interesting (like Pat). Oh no. When I have a Strange Idea I play it right into the ground.

"What's that Danish cheese?" I asked Pat.

"Danish Blue?"

"No, no, no."

"Danbo?"

"No."

There was a fairly lengthy pause. I began to consider whether I could get away with Seduction Ploy Number Three for the third night running. (This consists of a gentle squeezing of the buttocks (your partner's, not your own, unless you prefer it that way), a nibbling of the right shoulder and a whispered "how's about it?" in the right ear). Anyway, one way or another (this may be a personalzine, but it's not that personal) we became involved in what the divorce courts refer to as "intimacy". I was going at it hammer and tongs (that's a metaphor or something. I'm not some kind of pervert, you know. Well, not that kind anyway) when suddenly Pat gave an orgasmic cry:

"Jarlsberger!!" she shouted.

If any of my female readers should ever be threatened with unwanted sexual advances, I have a piece of advice for you which should prove 100% effective. Just shout the magic word "Jarlsberger" at your would-be rapist, and all traces of lust and desire will be eradicated. That's how it was with me, anyway.

And the worst of it was, that wasn't the cheese I'd been thinking of in any case.

Thursday 1st. May

The first issue of Gil Gaier's personalzine PHOSPHENE arrived a few days ago. It's slim, and a bit neo-ish, but promising. I've loosed this one so I won't say more than that.

At about the same time came the latest CHECKPOINT, and with it this year's Fan Poll form. I didn't vote last year, but this year I've seen a fair proportion of the eligible zines, so I feel more qualified to vote. That doesn't make the decisions any easier, though; few zines seem to have had more than one issue this year, which makes the five placements for Best Fanzine a tricky

\* I have it on good authority that this was in fact the original title of the book. But the publisher found he couldn't get all the words on the spine, so MacDonald had to shorten the title and write out all the cheesy references.



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proposition. I'm reluctant to vote for a fanzine on the basis of only one issue; hence, after some thought, my vote crystallised as: INFERNO, TRUE RAT, TRIODE, WRINKLED SHREW and MAYA, in that order. INFERNO, in my view, was way out in front, both in quality and frequency; the other four placings may be a little arbitrary. I'd have placed the Stewarts' TILL THE COWS COME HOME third, but it appears to be ineligible. Pity.

Best Fanwriter: ah, this is a bit easier. My favourites are Leroy Kettle, John Brosnan, Paul Skelton, Eric Bentcliffe and Gray Boak. Most of the others are either too erratic, not interesting enough or not active enough to deserve a vote.

Best Fanartist: just a matter of arranging the usual names in some new permutation, isn't it? I would have picked Ames, but he doesn't seem to have done very much for fanzines this year. So I'd choose Harry Bell, Terry Jeeves, Dave Rowe, Paul Skelton and Alan Hunter. Alan might have rated higher but for that amazing cover on MAYA 6, in which the poor girl's left boob is about a 38 D-cup, whereas the right one is more of a 36 C. I just hope it wasn't drawn from life.

Best single issue: has to be BIG SCAB 3, I think. Having just re-read it again, I've decided it just has the edge over TRUE RAT 4/5. Next week I'll probably change my mind again, but then it'll be too late. Decisions have got to be made now! (That's what it says in my copy of TEACH YOURSELF TO BE MANAGEMENT MATERIAL BY MAKING MEANINGLESS DECISIONS VERY QUICKLY SO YOUR SUBORDINATES GET BAFFLED.)

Best Article/Report/Column/&c: I was torn between THE THING'S THE PLAY in the aforementioned BIG SCAB and Bob Shaw's ONCE UPON A TYNE in MAYA 7. They're both absolutely fucking superb, but Bob's piece kept me laughing longer. I dunno whether it's nostalgia, or what, but I vote for that, anyway.

Best fanzine cover: scanning rapidly through the eligible zines available to me, I am unimpressed. The only one that catches the eye is Harry Turner's for ZIMRI 6, so I vote for that, though in B&W it would have been nothing. A poor show, you fanartists, what?

I do wish Peter wouldn't keep using this word "best". Surely "most enjoyed" would be more apt? I wouldn't know how to begin to pick the "best" in any of these categories.

Monday 5th. May

Having been introduced to the delights of neat whisky (or indeed whiskey) by the Skelentity, I now find that I am developing a taste for the stuff, and am beginning to see what all the fuss is about, whereas he has sworn off the booze for financial reasons. When I provide the liquor, though, he will at least condescend to taste it (i.e. he got to the bottle before I did). His verdict on Seagram's V.O. Canadian was "it leaves a funny aftertaste just above my Adam's Apple." He also thought it different from Canadian Club,

"She thought I already had Dynamic Tension in the only place it would do any good"

whereas I thought they both had a similar characteristic. It just goes to show that this whisky mythos is purely a matter of personal preference. Which is how it should be, of course.

Still on that most enjoyable subject, I was in the lab library stacks recently when I redicovered a pile of CONSUMER REPORTS, the American equivalent of WHICH?, dating back to 1968/9. In one of these there was a report on Bourbon, in which a (then) newly marketed and promoted brand, Seagram's Benchmark, came out appreciably better than the 38 other brands tested, including Old Crow and Old Grand-Dad, to name but two of the brands more commonly found over here. I think I'll write to the House of Seagram and ask how I can get hold of some Benchmark. I don't fancy paying over £4 a bottle for something that's not very well regarded by the "experts".

This past weekend we combined a visit to Pat's mum and stepfather in Burnley with a call on the Skeltonians in Stockport. During the latter a Great Theory was propounded, which may very well be the Salvation of the Universe one of these days. I refer of course to the Meara/Skelton Black Hole Theory. Now of course you all know how these orifices leap around the Universe gulping down matter left right and centre; well, I remembered reading somewhere that the process might be reversible, that the Black Holes might be persuaded to, as it were, throw up the matter they had consumed. So Paul and I devised this great idea for a story, in which the Hero would zoom back and forth over the singularity in his spaceship (the singularity being the point of no return as far as a Black Hole is concerned), emptying the contents of a five gallon cask of Passport Whisky in the appropriate direction on each pass. And let's face it, Passport is enough to make anything throw up.

Don't laugh. This may be serious.

I think I'll write Larry Niven. It seems just up his street.

Aha, my first loc, from Paul Hudson, 102 Valley Rd., Rickmansworth, Herts.

"You are right when you say it is tough competition with the likes of CYPHER, FOUNDATION etc., but I feel reluctant to change the policy of the zine ((GLIMPSE)) radically. In # 2 the editorial is slightly more "fannish" if that is the right word to use. Part of my aim is to convert the comic fans. I'm not much of a fan in that respect, but it seems you have to have a few strips or articles devoted to that section to sell the thing.

"My Brain 'Urts, Durnit?" by Dave Piper was really funny. So often you can set out to write a humorous article and, being self-critical, decide it's corny and even verging on pretentious. That's what happens to me ~~if~~ I look at my own work for too long. I'm glad Dave didn't destroy his in a fit of remorse."

Exactly right. This is what fan-pubbing means, especially when you're doing a personalzine: laying yourself on the line for people to react to. And,



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speaking personally, I find that it requires a certain amount of courage. But I feel a definite need to write this way, so I do it, and and anyone who doesn't like it can sod off, for all I care. At the moment, this is my thing and I gotta do it.

Yes Paul, I hope "fannish" is the right word to use. Who knows, eventually you might get hooked on the whole idea of fannishness.

Tuesday 6th. May

The book reviews in LURK 7 seem to have provoked some response from the publishers; Pan have sent along a couple of H. G. Wells reprints, THE WAR OF THE WORLDS and THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU, the former having a beautiful cover by George Underwood. I shan't review them, though, since I've already read them both, and they're too well-known anyway. Sidgwick & Jackson also sent along their latest offerings; Simak's CEMETERY WORLD, THE PORTALS by now author Edward Andrew Mann, and the most interesting of the lot, HERO'S JOURNEY by Sterling E. Lanier. Must get around to this one soon, I think.

Also a letter from Terry Jeeves, 230 Bannerdale Road, Sheffield S11 9FE, commenting briefly on most aspects of LURK 7. To think that SPECULATION in Roger's "The Great Fanzine Extrapolator" should have come out on blank sheets is nasty, Terry. Appropriate though, it seems. I was somewhat dismayed that you considered Dave Piper's column to be a send-up of fanzine poetry, since the layout of the piece, which was my idea, was supposed to depict the trailing-off of a train of thought. Ah well. You say I misunderstand TRIODE's aim: if its aim is to be an anachronism, then I understand it only too well. I'm surprised that you considered the overall production superb. I was rather disappointed with it. Our Romeo 750 is simple but not very versatile; for some of the illos I had to ink the drum from the outside, i.e. directly on to the felt.

I'm rather surprised also that despite your great fanning experience you can still write a rather superficial, catalogue loc. I'm grateful for any response, of course, but I'd have preferred a bit of the old vitriolic Jeeves we all know and love. But then, maybe there was nothing in the issue to stir up your wrath, in which case the fault is all mine.

An unexpected letter from my one-time co-worker, deep thinker, fellow guitar-freak, who I still regard as a good friend although I haven't seen him this past year since he moved down to London.....Geoff Bateman:

"Anyway Mike, how are you? And how are all the rats, pimps and mother-fuckers of 43 Bldg. (no names mentioned), and how is Pat, and how is your record collection, and how is your brain standing up to all the pressures of 20th. century life, all the running, jumping, screaming, screwing, drinking, farting, laughing, sleeping, eating, picking, scraping, wanting, taking, resting, hating and all the rest of it that goes into the making of a decent citizen? I trust you are coping with it all.

"He's all right in his place, but they haven't dug it yet."

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"Tell Pat I've learnt all about Assembler, DOS, CICS, TPS, VSAM, BTAM, LGMPPING, P<sub>2</sub>R/L, GLIP, FUK, GRIP, GRASP & GRUNT at work, in fact combine any number of letters of the alphabet in any order and I've learnt about it. Such is the beauty of computers."

Reading between the lines in these and other parts of his letter, I get the impression that Geoff is still into the Divine Light Mission. While I have known him, he's always had this driving need to believe in something, or as he would put it, to experience the truth. He's tried to find this truth in many places, starting with obvious dead-ends like alcohol, pot and acid, and moving on to those phenomena loosely classified as religions. None of them held him for very long, but this latest involvement is by far the most durable, having lasted for about two and a half years to date. His wife and various of his friends also became "converts", if that is the word; indeed, I myself became interested, but there were things about Guru Maharaj Ji and his movement that I just couldn't take, so I never took it further than that. My need wasn't as strong as Geoff's, I suppose. I often wondered why it was that their experience of truth never stopped his wife and his best friend from shacking up together, though.

Pardon me. I think my cynic is showing.

Never mind. He's a good bloke, and we can at least agree to differ without coming to blows over it. I wish a few other so-called religious people could do the same, begorrah. I think I'll take up his invitation to visit as soon as I reasonably can. Who knows, we might even recreate such almost-forgotten guitar classics as "Albert the Luminous Budgie" and "The Approach of the One-Legged Onion." Them were t'days, lad.

Wednesday 7th. May

From the sublime to the ridiculous; I have here Keith Walker's FANZINE FANATIQUE 8. No, really, it does seem marginally better-produced than it used to be, and its emphasis on fantasy- and comix-zines makes it a useful guide for those wanting to know what's published in those areas. But some things about it just make me double up; Keith tells us that he's run off the first five pages of the next ish, getting two of them in the wrong order. "Fate seems to conspire against me", he says. There's the makings of a classic punchline in there somewhere, I think.

Thursday 8th. May

A quote from "Bacchanalia at East Wittering", the front page story in today's SUN:

"The strip poker session began at 3am. The husband announced to the remaining guests that they were to play strip poker. 'He said that anyone who did not want to play should get out, but it was not a peep show', said the judge. 'Later one woman reduced to bra and pants got up to leave the room, telling Mr. Cakley and her own husband that they were disgusting.'"



Q: What kind of snake would you find on a car? A: A windscreen-viper

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Now she's what I'd call a poor loser.

Let's talk about books again. I've decided not to comment on every book as soon as I finish it, but to wait until there are five or six awaiting comment, then do them all together. That way, if you don't like reading comments on books, or if it's just my comments on books that offend you, you can skip that  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a page or so, knowing you're safe for another fortnight.

First off the pile is BORED OF THE RINGS, the parody of Tolkein's masterwork. Yes, it's very funny - for a while. Then it seems shallow and trivial. And finally, towards the end, it picks up a little. The trouble is that I don't feel this kind of humour to be suitable for a book-length work; its sameness tends to pall. Nevertheless there are inspired moments - one of my favourites being the substitution of pill-popping Tim Benzadrine for Tom Bombadil. Definitely worth a read. I suppose your enjoyment of it may depend on how dear to your heart is the original.

Thomas M. Disch's THE GENOCIDES is possibly the most depressing book I've ever read. Nevertheless there is a kind of power about the writing which makes it so compelling, though you may feel like bursting into tears. The plot is very simple: an alien race seeds the Earth with a species of plant which, in a matter of a few years, completely covers the surface of the planet. The crop is then harvested, presumably for food, though we are not told this. The aliens also burn out all the cities, and leave traps for the remaining wildlife - including man. Man, of course, survives the longest, and this is the story of one such surviving group. I read it on the pure story-telling level, and found it fascinating. There may well be more to it than that. Definitely one I shall re-read.

Now we come to a really amazing book; Sidgwick & Jackson have printed Brian Ball's PLANET PROBABILITY straight from the original DAW plates (cost of DAW book over here = 45p approx.) and are charging £1.95 for it in hardcover. I wouldn't mind so much if it were a halfway decent book. But it isn't, it's drivel. The plot involves the Frames, each of which is a sort of total-participation movie, discovered by some forgotten race and eagerly accepted by a bored humanity. Okay - you'd think a competent author could make a decent space-opera out of that. But Ball does nothing constructive at all with the idea, in a style which is sheer hell to read. I wonder how many copies they got out of one tree? They shouldn't have bothered. It makes me fucking angry that paper and time is wasted on this drek, when there are so many great sf books, old and new, that should be permanently available.

Jack Williamson's THE REIGN OF WIZARDRY first appeared in UNKNOWN, that great magazine, in 1940. It's a pseudo-historical fantasy set in Cretan times, and is much better written than THE NOT-MEN, which appeared eleven years later. Quite readable, but not sf.

Colin Kapp's THE PATTERNS OF CHACS is top-line space-opera; a sort of modern-day 'Doc' Smith, and I don't mean that disparagingly. If you can accept the basic plot-idea (and I found this to be the weakness of the book) then you're



"How do you know it was out of sight if you couldn't see it?"

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on to a winner. The idea is that the natural tendency of entropy towards a maximum can be interfered with by a civilisation, for example. Man, for example. These interferences create 'entropy waves', the interaction of which constitutes the Patterns of Chaos. If you are a syncretist, you can read the future.....or mould it? This is in the best tradition of space-opera, spanning galaxies and hundreds of millions of years. I found it utterly unpretentious and gripping to the last page.

Two goodies, two so-so, and one bumner. My taste must be improving.

Saturday 10th. May

Letter from Pamela Boal, 43 Hawthorne Crescent, Grove, Wantage, OX12 7JD:

"I enjoyed every single bit of this last issue, unfortunately I'm in the same position as Keith Freeman, nothing prompts strong or printable (from the point of interest) comments. No that is not quite true - I didn't enjoy your difference of opinion with Archie Mercer. I think it is sad that you could not have settled it in private. Even then I had to laugh at myself, that possible meaning of your new zine's title never occurred to me until you said that it might offend. That pure-minded I'm not, just in that instance slow. True, some people are rather like the spinster who climbs on to the cupboard with binoculars and then complains about the things she sees. On the other hand there is no denying that some fen boorishly use certain forms of expression purely to shock people. Others lacking a wide vocabulary fondly imagine such language is more expressive, and some mistakenly imagine it is the everyday usage of a certain class of people they wish to portray, being too lazy to actually listen to the people they think they are portraying. I'm sure neither of you condone such use of language nor would use articles by people who make such use of language, without a valid reason. Your reason might not be valid to me but I know that I would accept that it was for you. I'm sure too that Archie Mercer wouldn't claim that he has never been guilty of a lapse in good taste. As I say, it is sad that nice people should fall out on that subject in the last issue of LURK."

True, it is sad. I'm an easy-going sort of bloke, who prefers to get on with people, or if he can't do that, will simply avoid them rather than get involved in a slanging match. Perhaps, in a spirit of fine fannish anger, I overreacted to Archie's comments. Perhaps I should have settled it privately, as you suggest. However, the tone of Archie's letter got under my skin so much that I blew my top in print instead. What may not be quite clear is that I originally thought, in my naivete, that Archie's comment on what Harry Harrison said was in the nature of a witty-type remark, rather than being sarcasm over "inappropriate" use of language. I reprinted Harrison's remark alongside Archie's comment so that readers would more easily get the joke. Silly me. But the point which Archie doesn't seem to grasp is that LURK, and KNOCKERS, are our fanzines. Pat's and mine. The only people who decide what goes in and what doesn't are Pat and me. If we wish to use language that others consider

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inappropriate, then we will do so, since otherwise we wouldn't be presenting a true picture of ourselves. This also applies to comments by others which we may print. To complain about it seems about as meaningful as banging one's head against a wall. If it really offends so much, a note in simple English will suffice to ensure no further copies are sent. I don't change the way I write for anybody, nor do I think such change can reasonably be expected.

To pass on to the other points you make, Pamela, I really doubt if any fan-writer uses so-called foul language purely in an attempt to shock his readers, whether he has a wide vocabulary or not. These words are only different from the rest of the English language in the emotional loading certain people place on them. I would expect that in most classes of society one could find people who use such words frequently and those who do not, if at all. So what? Chacun a son gout - do your own thing. Remember it's sticks and stones that hurt, not words.

Passing on to lighter things, here's a letter from Dave Rowe, 8 Park Drive, Wickford, Essex, SS12 9DH:

"A golden tear is slowly trickling down my right cheek. It's not so much the end of LURK that has caused this, as the runny ointment I'm taking for an eye rash.

"Nevertheless I was sorry to see the last of LURK, especially as I'd just wrote and told Darroll and Rosemary that I was sure you two didn't like me any more, as since I called off that trip to Derby you've never sent me another copy of LURK. You killed a good fannish joke, Ghod damn you!

"I was going to say I'm looking forward to seeing your Knockers, but I've got a feeling that would get you to dislike me.

"I've already written to Mae about my hair. "Absolutely wasted on him" - you poof, Mike! I expect that sort of line from the women, but from you? How dare you! My hair and I are very attached; I think it's the tops and it's kept me covered for nearly a quarter of a century. I admit we have brush-ups from time to time, and on occasion it seems to be a washout, but we comb things out, and there's really been no parting, as one has to take the dandruff with the smooth, and as we were on our way to being a big wig (and don't you shampoo-poo the idea) we find our dry humour keeps your greasy remarks and bald statements at spray. After all, every little scalps.....lock it to me, lock it to me, lock it to me.

"When you've stopped being sick, you might like to know that's just a friendly warning; next time you make any remarks like that I'll get Sam Long to write my puns."

No, no, say you don't mean it Dave, nice Dave, old pal old buddy old friend. Upun my word. I must admit that your barbered comments caught me by the short and curlies, leaving me limp and bedraggled and in no condition to reply. It's only the fact that I've had four locs already that prevents me from dyeing



"My biggest regret is that I am physiologically incapable of being a lesbian"

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away hair and now. I'd like to thank you for writing, anyway, although I feel you misunderstand me (sod it, I can't think of any more) since from my point of view your hair would look better on a girl. How dare you call me a poof; that electric-shock treatment worked wonders.

Sunday 11th. May

COOK ME SIDEWAYS, or, SO THAT'S WHAT THEY MEAN BY "HIGH SPEED GAS":

Possibly it has something to do with the curvature of space-time, but it seems that Derby is always on a direct line between wherever Fred Hemmings is going and wherever he is at any given moment. He was here again this weekend, on his way back from Buxton. He appears to have found something else to spend money on: records. I had thought his taste in music to be limited to Elvis Presley, Kathy Kirby and the soundtrack from "South Pacific". Not so. We spent an enjoyable Friday evening going through my collection, looking for items of possible interest to Fred; it was nice to find somebody who would listen to anything, and form an opinion afterward, rather than before. Not to say that our tastes coincided; far from it. We argued, sometimes heatedly, throughout the evening.

On the morrow we scoured Nottingham for secondhand and cut-price LPs, Derby having little to offer in that line. I picked up four, and so did Fred, the difference being that Fred's purchases brought his total over the previous fortnight to twenty-five or thereabouts. Pat was gobsmacked; "Never again will I complain about you buying records" she told me. I shall hold her to that.

Apropos of nothing much, on Friday evening Fred had mentioned that he needed a new gas cooker for his house. Now as it happened we'd had a spare cooker sitting in the garage for a year or more, donated by my mother when she remarried and moved into an all-electric house. We'd intended to install it in place of our present model which was showing signs of age (Pat assures me she could see daylight through the back of it when the oven door was open), but, typically, had never got around to it. Scanting the prospect of monies and more garage space, I explained all this to Fred, who was all enthusiastic over the idea of a cheap grill. The subject was then dropped (as subjects tend to be when you've had a few), leaving me with the impression that at some time in the nebulous future, Fred would ride up on a white charger, or more likely in a dirty grey hire-van, to cart the thing away.

But Fred's motto is never put off till tomorrow what you can persuade a couple of suckers to give you a hand with today. And so it was that about three o'clock on the Saturday afternoon:

"What about these cookers then?"

"These cookers? Oh, those cookers. What about 'em?"

"Are we going to change them over?"

"Now?"

"Why not?"



S.F. Five-Yearly isn't dead....it's only half-decade.

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"You're surely not proposing to take it away today?"

"Why not?"

"In your car?"

"Why not?"

I should perhaps explain at this point, for those who don't already know, that Fred's mode of transportation (I really hesitate to call it a car) is old beyond belief. It is reputed to be the very vehicle in which Noah and his family drove out of the Ark after the forty days' flood. (All right, so I was exaggerating; it's a 1959 Ford.) American readers should also remember that British cars tend to be somewhat smaller than the mobile dance-halls they drive around in. Still, if Fred was happy with the idea, why should I complain? It was his car, neck and insurance policy at stake, not mine.

We measured the cooker, and the car. Theoretically, it would just fit. Theoretically, the QE2 would fit the Houses of Parliament. Personally I wasn't too keen on tackling either job (even assuming anybody would want the QE2 inside the H of P. Mind you, it couldn't do much worse than the mob we've got in there at the moment.) Anyhow, we trundled me Mum's old cooker out of its spidery hiding-place in the garage, and got it into the kitchen without too much difficulty. Then the tricky business of changing over the piping, with only the aid of a small self-adjusting spanner, a remarkable tool with a mind of its own; no matter how often you reset it, it always adjusted itself to the size it thought the nut was. Despite this handicap, the task was accomplished with little more than the legal minimum of cursing and swearing (see PIPERS' HANDBOOK, 15th. edn. 1973, sec 5 (iii) para c). Now then, hands up all those of you who thought I'd forget to turn off the gas supply first? Hmmm, I see. You will all write out fifty times: "Zis Meara cheppie ist mehr cunnink zan I thought". And see that you have it ready for tomorrow.

And now the necessary dismantling. Have you ever considered that an old gas cooker makes the perfect educational toy for a mechanically-inclined child? Think: it consists of about seventy-three million different bits, most of which are rusted solid so it takes ages to get the thing apart. Then, when it finally is in pieces, most of these bits have such obscure shapes that it takes even longer to figure out how to put them back together again. Hours of silent fun for the kiddies. Well, fairly silent. And of course the whole thing is covered in greasy muck of a quality guaranteed to satisfy even the most discerning youngster. Desperate parents with troublesome kids do of course have the option of leaving the cooker connected to the supply whilst play is in progress, in the hope that....well, I don't wish to upset the squeamish.

Having removed most of the ~~bits~~ awkward bits, and having taken on the appearance of nigger minstrels (am I allowed to say that?) in the process, the most difficult operation lay ahead. Fred drove his vehicle up to the back door (which, logically enough, is on the side of the house) and covered the upholstery with old copies of THE SUN. (A good thing he didn't think to take time out to study the page three nudies, or we wouldn't have finished the job yet.) Our first plan, which we called "The First Plan", was to load the cooker

"On Xanadu did Kubla Khan/a stately pressure-dome decree..."

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sideways onto the front seats and sort of topple it over their backs onto the rear seat. Sort of. However, I saw a snag.

"The steering wheel", I said. "It's in the way."

"Oh" they said. "So it is. Fuck."

It was just like in the old movie serials. An impasse had been reached, and all seemed lost. Would Our Heroes win through? Then Pat, who apart from 36-26-38 hasn't figured much in this story so far, had an idea:

"Why don't you take the front passenger seat out?" she said.

Well I ask you, any fool could see why not. Couldn't he? These fools couldn't, so they looked, and it turned out to be simplicity itself. These old cars relied on really basic, primitive engineering (which is probably why they last such a long time). Having accomplished this by means of a different tool, the multi-purpose spanner (remind me to tell you about that one sometime) it was a simple task to manoeuvre the cooker onto the floor pan and wedge it in place with the car door. The resultant lack of space in the cab meant that the change from first gear to second could only be accomplished with the thumb and forefinger of the left hand, but who needs second gear, anyway?

As Fred and his car lurched slantingly off down the road towards Slough, we waved him goodbye with tears in our eyes. Would we ever see this noble adventurer again? If he had to stop suddenly, would the cooker keep on going and rip half his car away? If he cornered too fast, would the door give way under the strain and deposit a free cooker in somebody's front garden?

We've never heard from him again.

Mind you, it is only thirty hours since he left. Maybe he hasn't arrived yet.

Tuesday 13th. May

Another ish of MOTA arrived yesterday; Christ, he can certainly churn 'em out! Number 10 is another great issue, but the two main items, by Berry and Burbee, are reprints. A sad commentary on the present state of faanish writing, in the U.S. at least.

Bruce Pelz sent PROFANITY 8 (number 7 came out over fifteen years ago!). Glad to see you back in genzine fandom again, Bruce. Reading between the lines, I gather you'd be pleased to trade with most anybody. This is a nice, relaxed personalzine - no high-powered fannish humour, just chat about Discon etc. Good stuff.

My friends, it is always an occasion for rejoicing in the fannish world whenever a new fannish word or phrase is coined. Therefore let us join together and give thanks unto Alan Stewart, 6 Frankfurt am Main 1, Eschenheimer Anlage 2, Fed. Rep. of Germany, who this day has given us "PoC" - postcard of comment:



"His thoughts are punctuated by comas and fool-stops."

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"Ta for LURK 7. I did laugh at Cy Chauvin's mock interview with "John J. Pierce". That's just how some stupid old ((expletives deleted)) would behave - "the message of science fiction" and all that crap! Cy was right to set it back a few years, when people were still interested in New Wave v. Old Wave arguments."

Okay, okay, Mr. Sarcasm, so you thought the interview was out of date and irrelevant. You were being sarcastic, weren't you? Or have you been at the little yellow pills again? Mr. Pierce may be a ((expletives deleted)), but he's neither stupid nor particularly old. Misguided, maybe. I expected criticism of a rather more constructive nature from a writer.

Wednesday 13th. May

Well, I finally did it.

I can't say it wasn't easy, but after years of not trying I've finally managed to concoct an alcoholic drink that tastes exactly like.....piss.

Since you're all no doubt desperately anxious to learn the secret of how to avoid this nauseating brew, I'll explain that I am at the moment into port and sherry-type drinks, and having sampled Augustus Barnett's 1934 port at £2 a bottle, which was utterly inkredibule, I thought I'd see what else they had in that line, but cheaper. So I came across this stuff (and believe me it tastes as though somebody did come across it, or into it) called REVELATION, a "dry fortified wine", at a mere 89p a bottle, which is about £1.50p too much. Jee-zus, but it was awful. So what to do to improve it? Almost anything, you'd imagine. You'd be wrong. First a dash of Starka, which is a gutrotting 87 proof "rye grain speciality" of Polish origin; that gave it a bit more bite, but didn't improve the flavour any. Then my dear wife, may Roscoe haunt her, suggested a drop of apricot brandy; that did it. The quantity's critical, mind you; too much and you could almost drink the result, if you were desperate. So here, as Jimmy Young would say, is the recipe again:

1 wineglassful REVELATION dry (or any really cheap dry sherry)  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  measure Starka (or  $\frac{1}{8}$  measure grotty whisky)  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  measure apricot brandy.

I'm still trying to think of a name for this cock-tail. Anybody any ideas?

Letter from Ian Butterworth, 29 Larkhill Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 5QW:

"Many thanks for sending me LURK 7, and I am sorry to hear it is to be the last issue. However, I must admit I had a good laugh at some of the letters, especially these concerning the 'protesters' and other such anarchaic influences. What the Hell's wrong with a bit of chaos? Ye Gods, life only gets interesting when things start to go wrong, when you have to start reacting to the situation instead of sitting there for hours on end pondering the significance of that bit of fluff in your navel.



"As everyone knows, the Universe is a dodecahedron" (Bertrand Russell)

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"If you're really fed up with small time bands like the ISB try looking and listening to the most accomplished band going around today, 10cc. They're so far ahead of everybody else they can look back and laugh at them, and you can hear them laughing on their albums."

What a strange life you must have. How d'you fancy moving to Derby and getting a job as a production manager with British Celanese? The plants go so wrong so often that you'd be in a continual state of orgasmic ecstasy. To be serious for a minute, I really don't go for your philosophy at all; if nothing ever went wrong in my life again it'd be too often, and the only time I study my navel is in the bath.

I didn't say I was fed up with the Incredible String Band, nor would I agree that they're a small time band. From what I've heard, 10cc strike me as a high-class pop group, and I don't like much current pop music. Maybe their LPs are different from their singles.

Paul Skelton, 25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, SK2 5NW, Cheshire, after some introductory waffle, says:

"But we were talking about LURK, or rather we weren't talking about LURK, but we should have been. Actually this about sums up my attitude to the seventh and final LURK. It was a light, mildly entertaining read, but nothing more. Now, I've been shying away from saying this, which is probably why the LoC has taken so long in the writing. I'm one of those sensitive souls who don't like saying 'not nice' things about the fanzines that have been produced by good friends. Especially when said good friends say nice things about our zine. It's somehow so.....oh, despicable, caddish, just not done. I especially don't like saying it about good friends who are doing me some free fotygrafts. I especially especially don't like saying it about good friends who are bigger than me.

"I am quite looking forward to seeing Rog Peyton's bookshop, especially after that line ".....where they'd spent a fortune in Rog Peyton's bookshop and purchased six months' supply of groceries....." This sounds like a rather unique bookshop to my way of thinking, where Heinlein is filed alphabetically between 'Heat-a-Snack' and 'Heinz'.

"I must admit that I do agree with Terry in that the world is not a foul and pestilent place. No world that contains things like Scotch can be foul and pestilent or, to be even more serious, any world that contains good and true friendships is not a foul and pestilent place at all. That goes double and treble for the even more intimate personal relationships of marriage and family. The world could be a midden and grim with it but as long as I can share a Scotch and an evening with you and Pat and then a cuddle and a peace-sharing with Cas.....and in the morning that nunsh burbling all over us irrepressibly.....it couldn't be a foul and pestilent place. It may have foul and pestilent aspects, but they are the lesser part of it, and IT IS JUST SO FUCKING GOOD TO BE ALIVE AND LOVED AND TO LOVE and share appreciations in friendship. I want to scream that from

"Man, isn't this one of those days that make you wish you were alive?"

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the rooftop. I am falling more in love with Cas with every day and it hurts that I can't express it adequately. If I could create a Ringworld about us and cover the inside with the slogan 'CAS, I LOVE YOU', it wouldn't be enough. It doesn't need expressing of course, but there ought to be a way.....

"I personally would have thought that the intelligence of fans was above average. It may sound smug but I've always thought that it was the more intelligent/literate/intellectual people who now read SF and who come via that medium to fandom itself. I realise that this is an idea which would of necessity appeal to me because I am one of that group, and as such must be felt by people of any group. Despite this I still hold to this. I never feel more inadequate than when among fen. This may all sound like elitist nonsense. Skel's new fascist group, slogan "Fen Uber Alles", perhaps.

"Just a minute.....you never rang back last night, or if you did it must have been whilst the skelinlaws were ringing up every relative in the known universe and several that aren't. (I'm sure one of their calls used the dialling code of the black hole nearest to the Puppeteer home world.) (And just what are the laser-boosted charges to the Sirian Confederacy anyway? Lockit that, a lousy bleeding 8p they left me, for an attempt to set up a pan-spatial communications link-up.....bleeding 8p.)"

It's a funny thing about those 'free' fotygraffs.....they've just gone up to 50p a print! (Plus VAT, of course). Really, I prefer your honest but adverse opinion to insincere flattery. And anyway, if I keep on losing weight at my present rate, by about November 1976 I'll be smaller than you. Thus are the barriers to free speech removed.

Oh dear, I've really been sat on over this 'foul and pestilent' thing, and for no good reason that I can see. Like Terry, you missed the point of my remarks, which concerned the destruction of our physical environment. Your concern seems to be more with social and emotional aspects, and I agree with all you say, except where you say that the foul and pestilent aspects are the lesser part of the world. Consider this: suppose that your young Bethany Leigh were growing up in Birmingham, say, where there's lots of traffic, or in the States where the problem is worse, instead of in the rather quiet area, traffic-wise, in which you live. She would then run a much greater risk of permanent (permanent, mark you) brain damage as a result of ingestion of lead compounds from traffic exhaust fumes. Consider further that there is absolutely no justification whatsoever, apart from the financial one, for putting lead additives in petrol at all; consider further the thousands of kids whose lives have already been ruined; and that this is just one example out of many. Now tell me it's a lesser thing.

I hesitate to express an opinion on the relative intelligence of fans and mundanes; possibly if large numbers of fen were to take I.Q. tests it might prove something, if only that large numbers of fen had taken I.Q. tests. I feel it's not intelligence we're debating, but an even more elusive quality -



"He didn't give us champagne, only some ordinary French white wine.....

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call it vitality, or awareness, if you like. Certainly I can say that my fannish friends are on the whole much more interesting people than my non-fannish friends.

Sorry I didn't phone you back that night, but I got a long-distance call from Phssthpok the Pak, and he kept me talking for hours.

Sunday 1st. June

All together now..... "Happy Birthday to Mike,  
Happy Birthday to Mike,....." etc. etc. Yep, this very day is my 27th. birthday. Funny, it seems like only yesterday I was a young thing of 26.

Somehow x days have gone by since last I typed anything on this stencil. First there was nothing to type about, then there was plenty but no time to actually get it down. Anyway, on this day when I should be out with t'lads, getting drunk and bemoaning my lost youth (now where the hell did I put him?), instead I'm staying in with t'Pat, getting drunk (maybe) and ruining a few stencils.

What's the worst thing that could happen to you on your way to work? A car accident? Getting caught in a downpour? Suddenly realising you've forgotten your wallet/panties/trousers? No, not even that. I'll tell you what it is, because it happened to me last week.

My coffee cup sprang a leak.

The first thing I do after driving to work in a semi-stupor is to aim for that humanising cuppa from the coffee machine. These things aren't perfect, as we all know only too well: sometimes you get a cup, but nothing in it except hot water; sometimes the vital fluid pours away down the drain-holes as the cup wedges itself somewhere in the works. But once the cup is in position and filling with the steaming brown liquid, one expects one's troubles to be over. On this occasion, though, I had to get the one cup in ghu-knows-how-many with a pinhole in the bottom. I was just walking off with my purchase when I had that hot dribbling feeling down my trousers. This could mean one of only two things, the first of which I rejected as being highly unlikely at my age. My mind crawled sluggishly to several conclusions:

- a) the coffee was too hot to gulp down on the spot.
- b) the cup itself was too hot for me to plug the leak, finger-in-dyke style.
- c) I hadn't got enough change to buy another cup.

Desperation. What to do? What would Flash Gordon have done? Or Batman? Fortunately I was saved by Batwoman, in the shape of a friendly typist with an empty cup. But it was a close thing I tell 'ee.

I predict that if this trend continues, I should get another leaky cup sometime in February 1981. Until then, I can feel secure in the knowledge that I am superior to a machine.

"...I think we were Chablis treated."

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An interesting item in today's SUNDAY MIRROR: apparently there was this bloke who was up in court, so to speak, five times in a year for indecent exposure. Then he was sent to do community service work.....as a nude model in an art class. Since then he hasn't committed an offence. The mind conjures up visions of this chap standing on a podium in standard flashing pose, complete with binoculars and dirty mac, and the students dutifully gauging his proportions against their thumb joints. It's times like this I wish I could draw.

But back to the real, solid world of sf, 'cause I've bin readin' dem books again. John Faucette's THE WARRIORS OF TERRA is pure bad old-fashioned space opera, about the attempts of the really butch hero and his bunch of rough, tough, but loveable associates to escape from slavery and get back to good old Earth. After page thirty I lost count of the number of evil but amazingly stupid aliens this bunch had mown down with their super-weapons. 160pp of blood, murder and unlikely escapes, with an ending as pathetic as it is unbelievable. Great reading for a condemned cell.

SINGULARITY STATION is another of Brian Ball's books that Sidgwick & Jackson appear to have printed from DAW's plates, but this time they're charging £2.50 for it. It's marginally better than PLANET PROBABILITY, but there's the same awful dialogue, the same artificiality of plotting, the same feeling that you're reading a 60pp novelette padded out to book length. Would make a good prop for a wonky table leg, if you kept just the covers and chucked the inside bit away.

I read and quite enjoyed RACE AGAINST TIME, Piers Anthony's novel for young adults which Pat reviewed in LURK 7, which must prove that I'm a young adult at heart if nowhere else. The racism angle would make it a good discussion book in a literature class, I would think.

Randall Garrett's ANYTHING YOU CAN DO... concerns the events following the crash-landing of an alien on Earth; the attempts to understand what makes him tick, to track him down and if possible communicate with him rather than destroy him are well told. This is a fair attempt to portray an alien mind, combined with an entertaining adventure story.

In the future society of Robert Wells' THE PARASAURIANS, the nasty old government won't let hunters shoot tigers and things anymore, except on carefully controlled breeding reserves, because there aren't enough of them left. So this mysterious organisation called Megahunt comes up with this great idea - mechanical dinosaurs! Populate a remote island with these realistic beasties, charge the eager ~~people~~ hunters a million bucks a time for the privilege of shooting bits off 'em, and you're on to a lot of moolah as well as the beginnings of a lousy plot. But - are the dinosaurs really alive, the products of forbidden experimentation with artificial life? Well, yes, some of them are, and if you think I've now spoilt the excitement for you you're wrong, because there isn't any. You can guess the probable nature of the denouement after the first three or four chapters, and the author, having realised this too, spends the rest of the book trying (and failing)



"I never knew my husband was a drunkard until one night he came home sober"

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to build up a bit of suspense. This book is a drag (but recommended for insomniacs.)

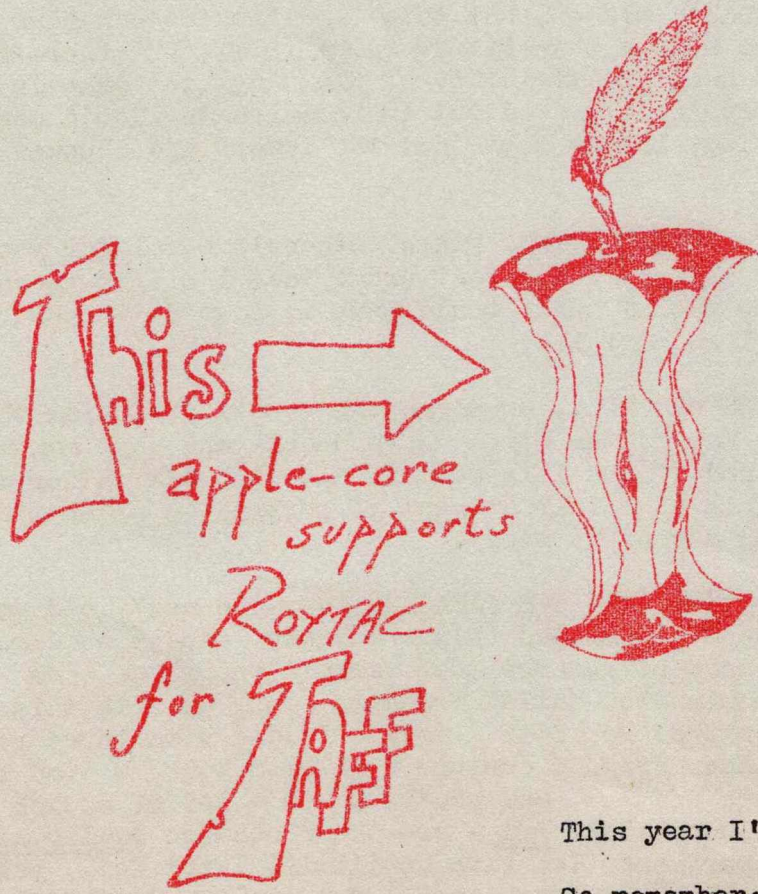
I'm not sure what John Boyd is trying to do in *THE RAKEHELLS OF HEAVEN*. He may just be cracking one huge anti-religious, anti-civilisation joke, or he may be trying to point up some of the evils of dogma and ritual, both religious and secular, in our present-day world. A two-man Space Navy expedition, consisting of an Irish rogue with an eye for the ladies, and a religious nut, lands on the planet Harlech (meaning 'heaven'), where the culture is 'pure' and has no concept of sin, or beauty. What happens when they try to impose humanity on the natives has a humour well shaded with black. There are a lot of Biblical parallels: the garden of Eden, the Crucifixion etc. I found it easy to read things into it which may not be there, but the whole thing is very entertaining, with no attempt to preach or moralise on the part of the author. Great stuff.

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Monday 2nd. June

.....several banana skins and orange pips have also told me, in confidence, that they echo this sentiment.

It seems that Dave Rowe sent the Skelentity this illo supporting Bowers for TAFF. Skel then suggested that if KNOCKERS supported Tackett (but not the other way round) then with a bit of luck we might get a bit of friendly rivalry going, and in time a whole hunk of bitter, virulent, all-out war. Anything to hot up the TAFF race anyway. I've never taken a great deal of interest in it before, I'm ashamed to admit, but since I would have tended to support Roytac anyway, here is visual evidence (courtesy of ye Skel) of my support.



This year I'll even send money, dammit!

So remember: ROY'S THE BOY!  
TACKETT'S THE TICKET!!  
ROYTAC FOR TAFF!!!

(These slogans copyright 1975 by VERY WONDERFUL DYNAMIC SLOGANS (1823) LTD.)

"I'd be a writer of little gems.....a sort of Jewels Verne."

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After the gas cooker incident related earlier in these pages, Pat sported a rather nasty bruise on her shin:

"Oh-ho," said the office innuendo specialist. "Been indulging in too much position 37 then, have we?"

"If that's the one where you bang your leg trying to get a gas cooker into the front seat of a car, the answer's yes," she replied, quick as a flash. Exit one innuendo specialist, somewhat gobsmacked. She confused him, the poor lad. When he starts muttering and drawing diagrams on the backs of old computer cards will be the time to summon the little men in white coats, I fancy.

### Random Memories of a Holiday Weekend

In July, we and the Skelton entourage are holidaying together in a caravan in North Wales. A seaside holiday isn't normally our sort of thing, but a slight financial miscalculation (i.e. we spent £140 we didn't have) indicated that the alternative to no holiday at all this year could just be a v-e-r-y cheap holiday. And anyway, we all get on pretty well with each other, so it should be fun. But we all agreed that a trial run would be a good idea, so they spent the recent Bank Holiday weekend (I always forget what it's officially called) with us, to see what problems might develop.

One which didn't was that of transport. Our little Datsun Cherry took four adults, two kids, a baby and a bootful of luggage with hardly a protest: there was still plenty of power from that superb engine. So I've no reason to suppose it won't take a roof-rack as well. Or have I? Proverbs about straws and camels' backs spring to mind.

On the Saturday we made an early start for Birmingham, Skel and I to visit Rog Peyton's bookshop, Cas, Pat and the kids to do some shopping. I dislike Birmingham as a town, and would hate to live there, mainly because they've capitulated and let the traffic into the centre in a big way. So despite the fact that it's fairly easy for the pedestrian to get around via the subways and walkways, the traffic fumes and above all the noise make the whole experience rather unpleasant. Nottingham, where the powers-that-be have decided to keep the traffic out of the centre as far as possible, is far pleasanter. So we only visit Brum about once a year, apart from the Novacon trip, though it's only 40 miles away, on good roads.

To make matters worse, there was some sort of parade on that day, so there were hordes of spectators to plough through as well. I began to realise what it feels like to be a water molecule in a gallon of other water molecules. Anyway, we finally reached Rackhams', where Skel bought himself a bottle of malt scotch (he even took a third of it away with him, when he left our place). This was a truly orgasmic experience for the whisky-lover, which will doubtless be related in exquisite detail in INFERNO; suffice it to say that whoever thinks up names like Bruichladdich for scotch might just as well call it Old Unpronounceable, if only for the sake of my tonsils. Orally removing some of the contents didn't help any either. And would you reject a bottle of Laphroaig just because the label had a slight tear? These label collectors are just too much, man.



"Tiger, tiger, burning bright, could you oblige me with a light?....."

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On Sunday we took the kids to Twycross zoo - they'd never been to one before. Bethany (aged about  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ) was most fascinated by the giraffes, but seemed convinced they were "doggies". Could this be a new insight into the evolution of species? Possibly not, since sea-lions were "doggies" too.

Someone was foolish enough to mention that Bosworth Field was only a few miles down the road from the zoo. Cas has this thing about Richard the ~~Third~~ Third, so there was nothing for it but to visit the place where the original Tricky Dicky lost his famous battle with Edward VII.....or was it Henry? Anyway, you get the idea. I was expecting a muddy field, in the middle of which a hand-painted sign inscribed "Big Dick copped it here" or some such. But no: they've got it all set up so as to screw as much cash as possible out of the unsuspecting (or suspecting but resigned) tourists. (I like that typo. Due to too much barley wine, of course, but it has an element of truth, nonetheless.) Car-parking was 10p, for a start. Then there was a "Battlefield Centre", a converted farmhouse with a display of bits and bobs, an un-free filmshow, and various booklets and brochures at various prices. (I got all this info from Pat; she and Cas went round this lot while Skel and I sensibly sat in the nice warm car, drinking Newky Brown and eating crisps, while the kids ran around desecrating various items of historical interest.)

These items litter the landscape in all directions: there's the iron gate over which Richard sprained his ankle trying to run away from the enemy; and the well where he drank and made his famous prayer, "Oh Christ, where's that detachment of American Fifth Cavalry I ordered last week?"; and the bush behind which he shot himself whilst hiding from the enemy; the telephone kiosk where he tried to phone for a getaway car whilst running away from the enemy; and of course the hill where he made his famous speech, "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" at which Henry (or was it Edward?) came up and said, "Okay, swap you!" Actually, that horse speech seems to have become distorted with the passage of time; what he actually said was, "Shit! We're losing!"

Just as we were beginning to wish we'd brought more Newky Brown, our wives emerged full of praise for the film show (apparently a reconstruction of the battle) and we all set off on a tour of the actual goshwow site of the battle, conveniently dotted at intervals with informative signposts. We learned all about Richard's position and Edward's (or maybe it was Henry's) position, the latter believed by experts to be similar to the modern-day number 78, but without the baby-pants. Also about the "sullen and untrustworthy men of Northumberland, who took no part in the battle but, when they saw which way it was going, retreated northwards." I didn't know the Gannets had been going that long, did you? There was also a very interesting one about battle formations; apparently the archers would line up in front, and behind them the spear- and axe-men, then the breast- and buttock-men, then the binoculars and dirty-mac brigade, with several battalions of the Third Mounted Gropers bringing up the rear, if you'll pardon the expression.

Having trudged for what seemed like miles around this bloody thing, I began to feel like a playing piece on a Monopoly board. I wouldn't have been at all surprised to come across a sign reading: "Next battle - Bannockburn, 400

".....Your pardon, sir, we must confess, we do not burn, we fluoresce."

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miles this way. Do not pass GO. Do not collect £200."

Alas, no. There is one consolation, though, in that the whole place seems quite suitable for a con. The programme facilities are all there - all we need to do is pitch a few tents and get in a few million gallons of beer and we're away. Look out for RICARDICON I.

Tuesday 3rd. June

Other random memories:

The Worst Pork Chop competition: one night we had pork chops for supper, cooked in foil in the oven. We couldn't agree on a recipe to suit everyone, so each person ~~gambled~~ his chop as the spirit moved him. I slapped some mixed herbs, oregano and mustard on mine before wrapping it up and bunging it in the oven; Pat used capsicums and tomatoes, and so on. Paul had vague memories of a recipe involving packet vegetable soup; seems like they were rather too vague, because he won by a mile. There was no prize - except having to eat your own concoction.

The Split-Crotch Bra episode: I bet you've never seen a split-crotch bra, have you? Neither had I, until then. Y'see, in a mad fit of something-or-other I'd once bought Pat some naughty underwear - open-tip bra and split-crotch panties - from one of those erotic lingerie houses. I wish I could say it was worth it. I happened to mention this to Skel, whereupon he became all keen to try them out.....on Cas. The good lady herself wasn't quite so enthusiastic - she's got sense, that girl. Anyone who's ever seen a pair of these panties will realise that they're really more suitable for an alien with three legs, but somehow Cas mistook them for the other half of the set and found, to her amazement and everyone else's amusement, that they looked better up above than they did down below. I hasten to add that she had all her clothes on at the time, so don't go getting any of those Sunday-papers ideas.

They took 'em away to try out properly in private. Must remember to ask Skel whether he thought it was worth it.

The Spud-Peeling Incident: Skel: "Are those potatoes supposed to squeak when you peel them?"

Pat: "No?"

Me: "Could be this is a Koala bear I'm peeling, then?"

The South African Scotch Coffee: Take a cup of coffee in one hand and a glass of scotch in the other. Sip alternately.

Limericks: a poor score - only two completed ones that I can remember. One was composed by Skel en route from Stockport, and will doubtless appear in INFERNO; the other is an (I presume) extremely libellous one I made up about Cas, which I daren't print. This para was a bit of a non-event, wasn't it?



Work is the curse of the drinking classes. (Bob Shaw)

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Skel, on pulling a wishbone with himself: "I won!!!"

The whole weekend was great. The weather was kind, which helped. The funny thing was, that although fairly vast quantities of booze were consumed, nobody ever got stupid-drunk, just loosened up a bit.

Definitely the best way, I feel.

Thursday 5th. June

Woe and terror! Doom and destruction! Augustus Barnett's have ceased to sell barley wine! As an alternative they're offering some canned muck rejoicing in the name of Watney's Export Gold, which the bloke in the shop assured me was "quite similar". Ah, that all-embracing word "quite". I fear his taste-buds may have bloomed and died, as did mine after one can of this larynx-paralysing brew. Never mind.....I found an alternative source of supply, which is even cheaper - provided you buy in lots of 24. Having bought a Japanese car, I feel it only right I should do my bit to bolster the economy by drinking lots of British beer.

Last Friday I received a birthday present in the post, inscribed thus:

A smart tape-recorder mender (ex: Hull)  
Received a dozen bottles, all full,  
But his mate (who was thicker)  
Came and supped all his liquor  
So his birthday was exceedingly dull.

A fan, full of whisky (and remorse.....  
Who shall remain nameless, of course)  
Whilst still thoroughly drunk  
Has mailed you this junk  
And says "Next time I'll drink HP Sauce".

The bottles were miniatures of scotch, in a sample pack, which Pat bought me as an advance birthday present. The tape-recorder has since decided that it doesn't like being mended after all. "This junk" turned out to be a couple of wartime Astoundings. Ta, mate.

Another thing, completely unconnected with whisky, the G.P.O. or sauces of any description, happened on the same day. Now how's that for a coincidence? We were driving along the A614 between Nottingham and its junction with the A1, a pleasant country road notable for the variety of wildlife, both alive and rather squashily dead, which abounds along its edges. We were trundling along when I noticed a pheasant hopping across the road just in front of the lorry we were following. It seemed oblivious of its peril until the last moment, when it made a frantic dash for safety. WHOMP!! A cloud of feathers told us that this was now an ex-pheasant. It was a stiff (or a splodge); bereft of life, it rested in pieces, doubtless smeared rather messily across the front of the lorry.

"If there's no God, who pulls up the next Kleenex?" (Bob Shaw)

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Our collective knowledge of pheasant behaviour was slim. Practically nil would have been a good phrase to describe it. And yet, genius that I am, my stupendous intellect hit unerringly upon the correct solution to the mystery, which promptly earned me a severe tickling from Pat, and me driving, yet. The bird was obviously playing that dangerous game apparently beloved of some small children in this modern age.

But whoever heard of a pheasant playing "chicken"?

Thursday 12th. June

Tomorrow is Friday 13th. I am not superstitious, I tell you; I don't believe any of this guck about throwing salt over your left testicle or breaking a mirror meaning seven years' impotence or whatever. But tomorrow is Friday 13th. If this fanzine suddenly ends here, you'll know why.

Well, not here exactly, 'cos I've got a thing or two to type yet. I got a card from Sidgwick and Jackson the other day (well, the other week actually). They'd deduced from the last issue of LURK that it was the last issue, but had failed to realise the emergence of a new publication from the ashes of the old. So they asked me to confirm that I didn't want any more review copies. Their postcard (or, to honour the ancient fannish traditions, pocsacrd) had been stamped by a franking machine, unaccountably set at Op, so I had to pay 11p for the privilege of receiving the thing, which, if I'd been quick-witted enough, I could have read in the postman's hand as he stood there asking me for the money. Needless to say, I wrote them a suitably-toned letter, requesting a refund. We shall see.

I've been getting through the old books recently, somewhat at the expense of the old fanzines, five of which I have currently clamouring at my elbow, begging to be mentioned. Later, later.

I'd tell you what Stuart Gordon's ONE-EYE was about, if I could remember it distinctly. As I recall, it's an after-the-disaster story about a mutant who's born with strange powers. There's some sort of quest involved as well. Oh, it's all incredibly tedious. If anyone can see any merit in this book, please tell me, since it did seem vaguely promising in places.

BORN LEADER is the first J. T. McIntosh book I can recall reading. Again it is a post-disaster story, about two two starships, with completely different ~~social~~ structures, which set off from a dying Earth, and their eventual conflict. There are some nicely-drawn characters, and it's good to find an adventure novel which doesn't rely on wholesale slaughter for its excitement. I think I'll look out for more stuff by this under-rated author, who as far as I know hasn't got a book in print in the U.K. at the moment.

I've been re-reading Asimov's FOUNDATION trilogy; like many re-readings of much-loved works, it was a disappointment. The basic idea is certainly a good one for a high-quality space-opera, but it didn't hold my attention this time through. Too much chat and not enough action, maybe. Still, apart



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from PEBBLE IN THE SKY it was his first attempt at a major work; maybe it would have been better if he had left it till later. It's sad to re-read a book and find it disappointing. It's happened to me many times now, and to you, I expect. I think the only solution is not to re-read books that you have greatly enjoyed, but only those from which you feel there is still something to be gained, which may come from greater maturity or whatever.

I first read Ballard's collection THE VOICES OF TIME about twelve or thirteen years ago; then, it was so different from any sf I'd read that I couldn't make anything of it. Now, I find it very enjoyable, not particularly because I understand the motive or meaning behind every story, but because of the atmosphere he conjures up in a mere paragraph. I wouldn't attempt to analyse any of these; just to say that I found THE OVERLOADED MAN and DEEP END in particular sadly moving. Read this if you feel like being depressed.

Kate Wilhelm's LET THE FIRE FALL is, I feel, one of those novels that you have to read at least twice before coming to any conclusions. All I can say is, if you haven't read it, you should. It's what the critics call Important. I've just read it for the first time, and it's generated a lot of half-formed ideas, which may or may not become clearer as time gives me a chance to reflect on them. I think any book which provokes ideas is valuable, don't you?

James Schmitz's THE ETERNAL FRONTIERS is the sort of sf book I'm becoming increasingly tired of recently; a routine adventure story with no redeeming features. Lots of killing, no characterisation, no interest. Shit! This sort of worthless book makes me yawn. I'm sorry, James and S & J, but what's the point in this?

Some of Pat's workmates came back from a course in Slough last week; it was one of those courses supposed to motivate one to Greater Things. The course leader said, "Just to show you've learned something, why not try going a different way to work next week?"

So one of the blokes did. He got lost, and turned up 20 minutes late.

I'm glad I don't feel motivated very often; the Company might complain. And Greater Things worry me hardly at all; I'll settle for those littler things, like health and happiness, and friends, and a good screw now and again, and booze, and peace and quiet, and a few others.....

Friday 13th. June

.....but only another 18 minutes and it won't be any more. I've just been watching the SUN TV Awards programme, in which top this, favourite that and best the other are voted on by readers of THE SUN. It was introduced by lovely Dickie Davis (the smoothest TV personality of the year?). There were the usual non-surprises: best pop act - the Bay City Rollers; best series - CROSSROADS, etc. But the really great thing about it was the way nearly everybody was taking the piss, in their own style. It was lovely to watch. Poor old DD seemed to sense this, but didn't seem quite sure what to do

"I wonder how they make enough propellers to go round." (Bob Shaw)

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about it. Nice to see that glittering showbiz veneer wearing visibly thin.

True-Life Stories Which Might Very Possibly Bore You To Tears Dept.: the other day I took a couple of thermometers from the lab. down to the chap who operates our pilot-plant, in the heart of the sprawling, smelly, semi-decrepit complex which is British Celanese. When I got down there I promptly forgot the reason for the trip, as is my wont, and left them on the front seat of the car whilst I busied myself with something or other. They sat there happily baking away for about half an hour in the Real Genuine Sunshine we've been having recently (book now folks - for one week only), and when I eventually remembered to collect them they were reading 43 C, which for you anti-Marketeters is nearasdammit 110 F. I can assure you that when I got back into the car to drive back to the lab., and burned my arse off on the semi-molten vinyl upholstery, and blistered my fingers on the steering wheel, it was a great comfort to me to realise that all this was happening at a temperature of 43 C (or as nearasdammit 110 F). Science certainly is wonderful - it can tell you how much you're suffering.

Have you costed your fanzine lately? If not, my advice is - don't. It will very likely give you severe palpitations of the wallet, not to mention acute inflammation of the overdraft. I worked out that to produce and mail 100 copies of a 40-page quarterly fanzine, which is what I'm aiming for, will cost me £80 a year at current prices. Jee-zus! Just think what else I could be doing with £80 a year!

Hmmmm.

Yes, well, on reflection it seems quite a good bargain, so maybe I'll stick with it for a while after all.

Monday 16th. June

Yesterday I filed my correspondence.

Most of you probably won't realise the all-encompassing magnitude, the sheer breadth and power, of that simple statement. In fact, it's rather like saying "Yesterday I cleaned the Forth Bridge - with a toothbrush", or maybe "Yesterday I built a Ringworld out of old OMPA mailings."

You see, I have this system (which I call The System) whereby all the letters, bills, receipts, pay-slips, booklists etc. etc. I receive are suitably dealt with and then flung onto a big pile (which I call The Big Pile, or sometimes "Oh shit, it's fallen over again!"). Sometimes I stick things on the pile before they've been suitably dealt with, which is why only a third of the locs Don Allen wrote to LURK ever saw print. (Sorry, Don: you were just unlucky, is all.)

Anyway, about every six months the pile gets massive enough to begin causing local distortions in the gravitational field, at which point I spread the whole lot out in various piles covering about half an acre of floor. This



"He said uh-huh and we took his assent for grunted."

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is when I discover that things which I would have filed there were filed entirely differently last time, and possibly vice versa. I suppose I could chuck about 90% of the stuff away, but if I did, the government would be sure to introduce some ruling whereby nobody could use the second-class post unless he could produce all his last three years' telephone bills.

Besides which, I have this thing about Entropy.

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No really, the GPO are OK; either they or the American lot have been uncommonly efficient, because I didn't really expect to get any overseas locs on LURK 7 before this issue of KNOCKERS went to press, but a couple have arrived already. The first is from Jim Meadows III, 31 Apple Court, Park Forest, Illinois 60466, USA.:

"Verra, verro sorry to see LURK go. You're right, I never got the 6th. issue, and that really ires a man like me who likes to have every issue of everything. I don't have your first ish either; could you let it be known in forthcoming issues of KFN that I will trade a copy of KWALHIOQUA 6 (May 73) or STAR\*BORNE v3n13 (June 74) for copies of LURK 1 or 6? I might even pay money."

Surely - be it known. I'd gladly let you have 'em myself, but in both cases I've only got my two file copies left. Plenty of numbers 2, 3, 4 and 5 though, if anyone's missing any. 10p per copy, in stamps.

Regarding your query about the ISB and Scientology, I'd heard some time ago that they'd become involved with it, then Andy Darlington's letter confirmed it. But that's really all I know. Maybe Andy could tell you more, if you wrote him?

Time for a few fanzines, I think. Well, Keith, I did read FANZINE FANATIQUE 9, the legible bits anyway, and I wish I could say it was worth the effort of finding out which page went where. Personally I hope you go back to your reviewzine format; at least when you're discussing a zine I've read, I've got something I can relate to.

Somehow I've got two copies of MALFUNCTION 7, Pete; one via Skel and the other through the post. Thank you, and thank you, and in that order. Can it be that your critics are getting through to you? On p7 you become distinctly tetchy over Sheryl's attempts to teach you a bit of grammar. As far as I'm concerned, the only purpose of grammar is to provide a standard method of stringing words together into sentences and sentences into paragraphs, so that us English-speaking bods can understand each other easily. Note that I say "standard": it doesn't matter which system we use, so long as we all use more or less the same one. Minor variations are acceptable, like that "us" a couple of lines back instead of "we", because it sounds friendlier. But you are out on your own, Pete; some bits in this MAL were so incomprehensible that I suspected you of indulging in 'substances'. (Stella Artois and black pudding is a combination to be avoided in any quantity, I feel.) Don't get me wrong: I'm not screaming "Protect the English language!" It can look after

"Sure I'm a good shot. Watch me get that albatross."

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itself, and will obviously change to meet the needs of those who use it. All I'm saying is: you'd make it easier for me if you'd stick a little closer to the system I know.

Inside one of the copies of MAL was a curious four-pager called SCIENCE FICTION INTERNATIONAL NEWS II, edited by Keith Freeman and Dave Kyle. I'll concede that there is a need, though maybe not a great one, for a zine covering UK sf news, but is there enough real news to fill even four pages every month? (It would have to be at least monthly to be of much use.) Most of the more important items appear in LOCUS eventually anyway, and yes, I know LOCUS is damned expensive, but SFI NEWS will have to improve an awful lot to be worth even the 10p per copy they're asking for it.

Here's a letter from Mike Glicksohn, 141 High Park Avenue, Toronto, Ont. M6P 2S3, Canada:

"Thanks for publishing the last LURK and for sending me a copy. Having within recent memory folded a largish genzine because of the difficulty of sticking to a regular schedule with it and the diminishing amount of simple pleasure to be had from its production, I applaud your decision to switch your energies to a less demanding and looser personalzine, which is precisely what I did. I can now publish at my own leisure, only when I feel the desire to do so, and when I have the time and the energy to spare. Thus each issue of XENIUM is still a pleasurable thing to produce, and that's the whole idea behind fanzines. I'll look forward to seeing your KNOCKERS when they appear.

"Some of the contents of this issue are not comment-inspiring for me, I'm afraid. Others are, but I'll do my best to restrain myself. The article on the fanzine publishing machine, for example, was amusing (Skel's cuckoo clock is excellent!) but there's not much else to say about it. And the sight of what I take to be a four year old interview with JJ on the new wave is something to strike fear and loathing into the hearts of trufen everywhere! I must assume that this is your idea of a sadistic joke. Hell, a mere article about the New Wave spurred me to write and sell my first, only and likely last piece of professional sf. And that was over a year ago already. My mind, despite its cosmic dimensions and broad mental horizons, is simply incapable of treating this piece of our dark and dreary past seriously. And I hope to god the rest of your readers feel the same way! Christ, next thing you know we'll be arguing the Boondoggle and the Exclusion Act all over again. Spare us, oh Mearas, spare us from such fates!

"I'm by no means an expert on wines, either domestic or imported, but I can tell you a little bit. Until fairly recently, say about three or four years ago, you could get a wide range of good quality imported wines at a reasonable price. At least, here in the big city you could. This included wines from most wine-producing countries in the world, although the French and German wines seemed to have the greatest popularity, whether for reasons of taste or simple reputation I'm not sure.



"But I hear you don't have to push dope - you can pedal it."

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Recently, though, French and German wines have doubled and more in price, going from anywhere near £1 a bottle to more than twice that. Even in the Good Old Days, while I'd enjoy a French Burgundy, or German Liebfraumilch, I also used to enjoy the less well known, cheaper, but, to my palate, equally enjoyable wines from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Hungary. These have risen somewhat in price, but to nowhere near the extent the "name" wines have. You can still get a 35 ounce ((we'd call it a litre)) bottle of dry Hungarian red or white wine for slightly less than £1. And I personally find them enjoyable indeed. Imported French Champagne can cost about £6 for a not-expensive brand. This compares with about £2 for the best of the domestic champagnes which is very comparable indeed as far as quality is concerned. (That's if you like champagne, which isn't one of my favourite drinks.)

"Domestic wines in Canada have, until just recently, been pretty much a joke. Running from about 50p up to £1.50, they are best used for cooking. (As Monty Python would say, a wine for laying down and avoiding.) Recently several new types of grapes have come to maturity in the wine-growing areas and there are now several domestic dry reds of considerable merit, costing about £1 a bottle. Also recently Ontario has started to import several of the better California wines (there are some) although I've not purchased any myself. There's a Cabernet Sauvignon in particular that is rated very highly by many of my wine-drinking American friends but I'm not sure what the price is up here.

"This brief summary applies to Toronto, of course. Susan found that Regina, in the middle of the Canadian prairies, was a whiskey swiller's paradise but a wine drinker's desert island. They had very few imports at all, the best of them being a surprisingly large selection of Australian wines. I'd say, though, that here in Toronto you could find just about any wine you wanted to, and if they didn't happen to have it, you could get it ordered as long as you were interested in a case.

"I suppose it's a matter of cultural acclimation but I didn't find the De Vere a poor hotel. On the other hand, I'm used to paying a lot more money for a lot less service at big American hotels, so by my standards there was little to complain about.

"I certainly had a great time at SeaCon, although it was far too short, and I'm going to do my best to return for another visit (not necessarily over Easter though) before the '79 worldcon. If I don't make it, though, you may be sure I'll be there to see the Queen open Peter Weston's extravaganza!

"Best of lurk with your new fanzine."

You're the second person to crack that joke about seeing my KNOCKERS; the third time I think I'll just go quietly berserk.

I'd had that Pierce/Chauvin interview on file over a year before I published

"He's a colossus only when he's stoned"

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it, and Jim Goddard had had it an unknown length of time before that, before he passed it on to me. Maybe it would have read better if it had been published earlier. I published it, not particularly because I thought it had any merit, or because I agreed with Pierce's sentiments, but purely to see how, or if, people would react. Most of them have, and your reaction of fearful disbelief is not atypical. Now, about the Boondoggle.....I had proposed to run my thirty-page, in-depth, psychologically-orientated, computer-verified, statistically annotated, definitive review of that affair - but since you're not too keen, I'll postpone it for a while. Okay?

I think French and German wines are most popular because the prospective buyer realises, if only subconsciously, that these wines at their best are the best in the world. Unfortunately the corollary to that is that the worst products of these countries tend to be overpriced, and hence poor bargains in relation to the similarly-priced products of the countries you mention, and also Italy and Spain. So the bloke who forks out his 89p for a bottle of Cotes du Rhone from P-t-r D-m-n-c may well end up pouring half of it down the sink. Since the Budget, though, there's very little under a quid that's worth buying, and the more expensive wines have become proportionately better bargains - if you've got the cash. We haven't - or not very often, anyway - so our policy now is to buy the odd bottle of good stuff for special occasions, and to make our own for everyday drinking. I recently opened a bottle of our third effort, a Chablis out of a Boots' tin of grape-juice concentrate, and in my unbiased opinion it was equally as good at 15p a bottle as many you'd pay £1 for. Now I wonder how long it'll be before crafty old Dennis Healey slaps a whacking great tax on home-brewing?

I checked in my Wine Atlas to see if I could specify that Cabernet, but there are several shown. It could be Charles Krug, Louis M. Martini or Inglenook. I can't recall ever seeing any American wines over here; I expect it's not economic to ship them all that way to compete against stuff from just across the ditch.

I see that the Monty Python LP with the Australian Wines sketch has reached you, then. Wasn't the Philosophers' Song on the same LP? I think those are among the best they've done.

Well, once again I've printed nearly all your letter, Mike. Not, I hasten to add, merely because you're a BNF, but simply because you write such goddam interesting letters, that I can react to at length. I'm lazy, you see; it's much easier to use somebody else's words as a springboard for fanzine writing than it is to think up something from scratch, and nearly as much fun.

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Okay.....I thought up this dire joke a couple of days ago, and I've been aching to find a suitable place to put it. (Shurrup - I know what you're thinking.) Here it is:

Q: What is a palindrome?

A: A place where aeropalins land.\*

\* and take off, of course.



"His sf collection has not been tampered with.....

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There.....that did hurt too much, didn't it?

Let us pass on hurriedly to some more fanzines: I knew you'd never stand the pace, Ed! I don't know how you managed even four issues of your book-size MOEBIUS TRIP. But I like issue 22 in this new "double-book" format - in fact I think it's the best format you've used yet. The real standouts thish are the interviews with Bob Tucker and Mae Strelkov - great!! But the rest of the stuff I found pretty ordinary; even the lettercol wasn't that good.

"If this is the third TRIODE you've received and you haven't writ...well, you'd better writ quick" it says on the penultimate page of issue 21. Well, I haven't writ, and I don't intend to, either. I only have time to loc first issues (if I can) or exceptional zines, and to my mind TRIODE, though very enjoyable in some ways, isn't exceptional in the sense I mean, i.e. it doesn't impel me to drop what I'm doing and put finger to typer-key. However, I presume we trade, since I received number 19 containing your message to that effect. Anyway, on to this issue: I would have expected more of a fanfare on the revelation of the identities of Hurstmonceaux & Faversham - or is there some crucial element I'm missing out on? Having read a few of these Harrison stories, I must admit that Owen and Nuttall, though I've heard of neither of them, do this type of thing extremely well. Are there enough stories to consider publishing a collection? Alan Hunter's attitude to comics baffles me, I admit. I can see that, as an artist, he could be interested in them for the artwork, which can sometimes be quite striking even to my untrained eye; but this bit about "combining art and literature as communication"....? I'm sorry Alan, but I just can't regard comics and sf in the same mental breath; the former is for entertainment only, if that; the latter, hopefully, can reach further than that. Admittedly the comic strip, like the cartoon film, could be used to devastating effect. In the latter field there are the shorts produced by the Eastern European countries, and longer efforts, like FRITZ THE CAT and HEAVY TRAFFIC from the States; but I've not seen anything comparable in comics, though it would be a help if someone please would talk seriously and constructively about this medium for a minute. Really, you've told us very little in your four pages, Alan.

You're a good editor, Eric; I can't imagine you ever publishing anything that was less than good. And yet, somehow the sum of TRIODE seems much less than its parts. I wish I could work out exactly why I feel that way.

Letter from Sheryl Birkhead, 23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20760:

"Wasn't too sure what type of a reply to send because of the changing changes (uh, does that happen to make any sense? I didn't think so) im-pending in your pubbing.

"So.... first off, I did enjoy SEACON -- perhaps someday I will learn not to be so nervous and uptight at conventions. (Being sick at the same time didn't help - came home - to the Dr. - to find out it was a reaction to the antibiotic he had given me -- such fun!) I'd love to come back to visit and wander around, but that doesn't look too probable, as you'll

".....it's still as you might say Vargo Intacta."

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soon see and for reasons unfortunately beyond my control.

"At the end of April, my boss called me in to say the contract money was being cut and that two jobs would have to go at the end of June - you guessed it! So, I panicked and foamed at the mouth a lot. Got depressed and so on. To make a long and gory story short - he then called me back in a bit over a month ago to say that they didn't know what I was doing about finding another job but that the company would like to keep me on as long as possible as long as I realised there would be no job security and that the same thing could happen at any time. So, I told him what I was doing - low-key job-hunting - and that I would continue to do so, but would like to stay on as long as things worked out. I decided to go for broke (which is also unfortunately close to the truth!) and asked for the whole month of July off - without pay of course - got it - but of course there is no guarantee that the job will still be here when I get back. Oh well. In the meantime I have the application filled out, but not sent, for government work - trying to get out of the lab and see what goes on in the publications end of science - we shall see. But, I'm mainly trying not to worry (I do enough of that already) and getting into a better mental outlook. So, at any rate, I won't be around for a month -- and who knows - when I get back, I might not be around anyway! Uh, that isn't really funny, but.... I have it a great deal better than most people would -- Mom won't evict me and the freezer is full - not to mention that it's summer and vegetables will soon be ready to can, etc.....

"Back a bit closer to LURK -- was indeed a pleasure to meet you! Ah yes, the trials and tribulations of putting out a zine. Some year (I've about given up on someday) I intend to fix or replace the mimeo residing in the bedroom upstairs and play with a zine again. Trouble (or at least one of them) is that I already have a pretty well thought out idea of what I'd like any zine of mine to look like and I - equally well - know just how much the last fiasco did NOT. Whee - such fun (and games and ink and mess!!)

"Yeah, I guess my letters aren't so hot (at least not constructive or helpful "hot" from a faned's point of view that is) -- sorry. I have a nasty tendency (that's what my advisor said about my thesis -- he didn't like it the first 2,896 times around) to write the way I speak -- and I am seldom constructive or helpful, so.... I'm surprised (but not very) that my rambling type of letter only shows up from several other people - do you get letters from epeople (oops) like Loren MacGregor or Terry Hughes?....

"I'm sorry that I'm a non-drinker in that I can't help you out on info about stuff available here or the prices. Every so often we have wine made from our cherries, grapes or boysenberries -- but I don't drink of that either (spoil sport?!) Just as well though - since my diet allows none (zero, zilch) of the alcoholic stuffs.

"Relatively quiet here - riding (when I can and it isn't raining), mowing the lawn (when I can't get out of it and the safaris start forming), normal type stuff - other than the job business... yup, life muddles along as



"They're publishing his appreciation issue for Christmas.....

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usual. Wish I could make Australia as I had planned for the past few years, but that seems a bit out of the (drat) question --- hope all the other lucky idiots whomake it have a blast and I expect to see dozens (etc) of reports to help out all of us poor smooks who couldn't make it down under!"

Have I somehow managed to convey the impression that I didn't like your writing style? Jee-zus, am I that bad at expressing myself? Or is it your insecurity bug showing through? Anyway, I printed most of your letter because it's the sort of stuff that puts me in a mood for rambling. Interesting to me, and I hope my readers think so too, but if they don't.....well, it's my zine, after all. I'm glad you enjoyed the con, and I wish we could have had a longer chat, but there's always such a lot happening all around you at a con, that it's difficult to really get to know new people.

I sympathise with your job problem; my own boss keeps on trying to push me out of research and into production. But all the production people I know are either young smoothies with too much ambition for my taste, or else old-young men who smoke too many cigarettes and look as though they have incipient ulcers. I don't have much ambition, jobwise; I work to live, and not vice versa. Though of course, if times get tough, my priorities will change - they'll have to.

Riding sounds nice, especially in the weather we've had here recently. I like animals, but I've never really been on man-to-man terms with horses and such; I've got the brains, sure, but they've got the teeth. And hooves. And what the ghu is a boysenberry?? Boysenberry wine would look really impressive on a label. Skel's drawn me some great labels for my home-made stuff - I may even publish some of them if he's agreeable. That mention of grapes prompted me to look you up in my atlas.....I see you're pretty far North and East, so I'm surprised. Hagerstown's on my map, but not Gaithersburg - sorry.

If you make it over for '79, or sooner (see how I'm assuming it's a fait accompli already) be sure to look us up. And that invitation goes for anybody who's reading this. Be sure to write first, though.

Fanzines again: CYNIC 8 is here, with a cover reminiscent of MALFUNCTION, or one of Keith Walker's zines, but better. Most of the interesting stuff in this "little small" issue concerns BOAKON 1 (BOAK CON 1? BOACKON 1?) This postponement by a fortnight is all very well, but it puts it a bit too near the Eastercon for my comfort. I realise this is all out of your hands, Gray, but it's annoying nonetheless.

Book reviews are OK, but they look a bit self-conscious amid all that fannishness. I like your fanzine column too, probably because it's rather like mine used to be in LURK. But the KFN format is better for talking about fanzines, I think.

The last line of a stencil

Resembles not in the least a pencil.

.....a sort of yulogy."

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Wednesday 18th. June

There is a club...nay, more than a club; a band, a close-knit fellowship of soul-brothers. Some faneds may make the grade quickly, others may have to wait years before that joyful day of membership arrives. Some - oh, how my heart bleeds for them! - some never get there at all, but can only linger longingly in limbo. I refer of course to the Corflu Spillers' Club, of which I have just, as of this stencil, become a member.

It's a proud, lonely and extremely embarassing thing to be a Corflu Spiller.

Handy Household Hint: why not add a touch of individuality to your home by splashing corflu over the paintwork? It stains, but lets the original colour show through, and it gives a delightful wrinkle effect. And it's only 36p for a huge bottle. Well, fairly big. Medium anyway. All right, bloody small then.

Here's a letter from Sam Long, Box 4946, Patrick AFB, Fla 32925, U.S.A.:

"Hurk hurk! the LURK...nice cover, but then that's not unusual when Dave Rowe's behind the pencil. Before I go any further, it doesn't seem likely that I'll get that job forecasting in Scotland, at least not in the near future. It's kinda on the shelf. I'm going ahead with applying to other possible employers of weathermen - including one that sends forecasters to south sea islands in the far corners of the Pacific, among the grass skirts and anemometers.

"Also, I'm leaving the Air Force at the End of June, as you know, and tonight there was a party for the officers leaving (retiring, getting posted, getting out), where I got given by the detachment two framed photographs: one of a Pioneer 10 view of Jupiter, because of my known leanings toward SF, and one of the Cape as seen from one of the Gemini manned flights: a beautiful picture. Fannish - don't you know it.

"Letters: Peter Egg Robts looks more saintly than Peter Spec Weston, but I'll have to agree with you that neither one of them would seem to be a candidate for canonization, even tho they're both what one might call a "son of a gun". Mike Glicksohn had toilet paper in his latest XENIUM; I told him that Peter Egg Robts had it in EGG 1 years ago. There's not much new under the fannish sun."

Maybe not, but how does the free gift with this issue grab you? Every issue will have a free gift, and Pat and I between us have thought up enough ideas for the first half-dozen issues at least. I admit the idea itself isn't new, but it's what you do with it that counts. Wait and see, anyway.

Somebody else with job problems, huh? I have a lovely mental picture of you in a grass skirt doling out the weather info to hordes of bare-breasted island beauties: "Well, ladies, it'll be the same old boring sunshine next week, with temperatures in the high eighties again, and not a ridge of low



"I don't see what a fan can do these days to help science fiction.....

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pressure in sight. What a drag!" I don't recall your telling me you were leaving the Air Force, but your going-away presents sound great.

Pat told me a nice story today. Apparently there's this bloke at her place who's really fallen for this bird he works with. The bird usually comes to work on the pillion of her flatmate's scooter, said flatmate having only just passed her test. "I'm not having her riding on that thing - it's not safe!" proclaimed her admirer, and promptly lent her his van, his only means of transport. The result is that his mates are getting pissed off with him cadging lifts home off them every night. Well, I think it's nice. I bet Sir Walter Raleigh would have approved.

Monday 23rd. June

Another PoC, this time from Gil Gaier, 1016 Beech Ave., Torrance, CA 90501:

"It hurts to contemplate your giving up LURK for a personalzine. Not that it won't be grand watching your KNOCKERS bobble a bit, but limiting your options for presenting material I'll wager will become uncomfortable within a few issues. So. No more brassy Waddington humour. No more insightful Cy Chauvin-type interviews. No more Piper slices. // At least I'll be starting at the bottom with everyone else. When someone says something about KNOCKERS 7, I'll know what went on. That is if I can translate everything into American-English. // Don't send any pleading notes asking for advice - just because I'm two personalzine issues ahead of you. Good Ghod, I'm finally ahead of somebody in something in fandom. (Okay, now tell me about the fat perzines you put out between 68-71 called RAGE OF ENGLAND. Tell me about how this new zine is just a finger exercise to "keep your hand in".)"

You filthy swine, sir! Keep my hand in what, pray? And I can assure you my fingers need no exercise; why, I remember back in '73 I wrestled a mosquito single-fingered - and beat him two out of three, too.

Thanks for your letter of 14th. May, too. Yes, you did mention why my letter in INFERNO 6 induced you to send me PHOSPHENE; something about having a healthy attitude to sex, if I recall. Now, where did I put those rubber binoculars?

Turn your back for a minute and half a dozen new fanzines gang up on you, making threatening 'mention-me-or-else' noises. PROFANITY 9 from Bruce Pelz has, I think, been around for a week or two; I didn't think it as interesting as the previous one, mainly because the diary section dwells over-much on things like diets and card-games, which I don't particularly enjoy reading straight accounts of. There's also too much incomprehensible LASFS politics.

The second issue of Paul Hudson's GLIMPSE is much bigger and more impressive looking than the first. It's printed on both sides of the paper, for one thing. The contents are not much to my taste, though: fiction and poetry,

.....except to go round the newsstands putting all the sf mags at the back."

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which I had to skip after a brief look; book, film and TV reviews.....the field is covered fairly comprehensively, but the quality is generally low. However, Paul waxes almost fannishly eloquent in his attempts to fill an awkward space at the bottom of p39, and this was the bit I enjoyed best. I can only hope that you'll eventually see the light and drop all this sercon stuff, Paul.

Turning to PHILOSOPHICAL GAS 30, we begin to feel that warm glow we get when in the presence of a master fanned. Despite his constant changes of policy, one cannot help feeling that John knows what he is doing. This is comforting. You ask three questions, John, which I shall attempt to answer:

Q: Can you write honestly about the work of a writer who is also a friend?

A: It depends on the closeness of the friendship, obviously. But this is a question within a question, since it raises the point of whether one should speak in public about what could better be discussed in private. Total honesty in print may not be a good thing unless one can make one's opinions immediately clear and one's meanings obvious.

Q: What is an amateur?

A: An amateur is one who does something primarily out of love, rather than for material gain. This does not necessarily mean he should not receive material gain. It's a question of motive.

Q: Does any work of art, good or bad, deserve the 'dignified respect of a proper criticism'?

A: A work of art deserves exactly the attention and response its recipient is prepared to give it. No more, and no less.

A wonderful issue of a quietly superb fanzine. Liked the Berry conrep especially.

ERG 51 is the first issue I've received since Terry left OMPA. It seems to have gone sadly downhill in the past couple of years. Layout and artwork are of their usual high standard, but the contents are just so-so. The most interesting bit was Rob Jackson's description of photo-offset, but even that read as though he'd dashed it off in his lunch-hour. The life seems to have gone from the whole thing, which is a shame.

Harry Bell's understated writing style rather reminds me of John Bangsund, so THE GRIMLING BOSCH 3 was a pleasant, if short, read. Too small and not often enough is right, Harry.

INFERNO 8 is to hand, as of last weekend, and is rather more balanced than number 7 was. There's nothing of mine in it, for a start, so you may buy with confidence, folks. Trouble is, it's all very readable, but no comment hooks for me this time, except the religion thing which is more suitable for a private letter, I feel. (Of course, if you begged me.....). Anyway, it's what a personalzine should be, which is a fairly enigmatic sort of remark to end a page on. Not to worry - the next page is the last.



"No, I won't stop smoking.....I'll see you inhale first."

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Books again, for the last time this. Sorry if I'm overburdening you with these comments, but my job at the moment means I can nip off down the factory, away from all the managerial-type cretins, attend to my experiment once every half-hour or so, and sit around reading in between times. So I get through an awful lot (for me) of books.

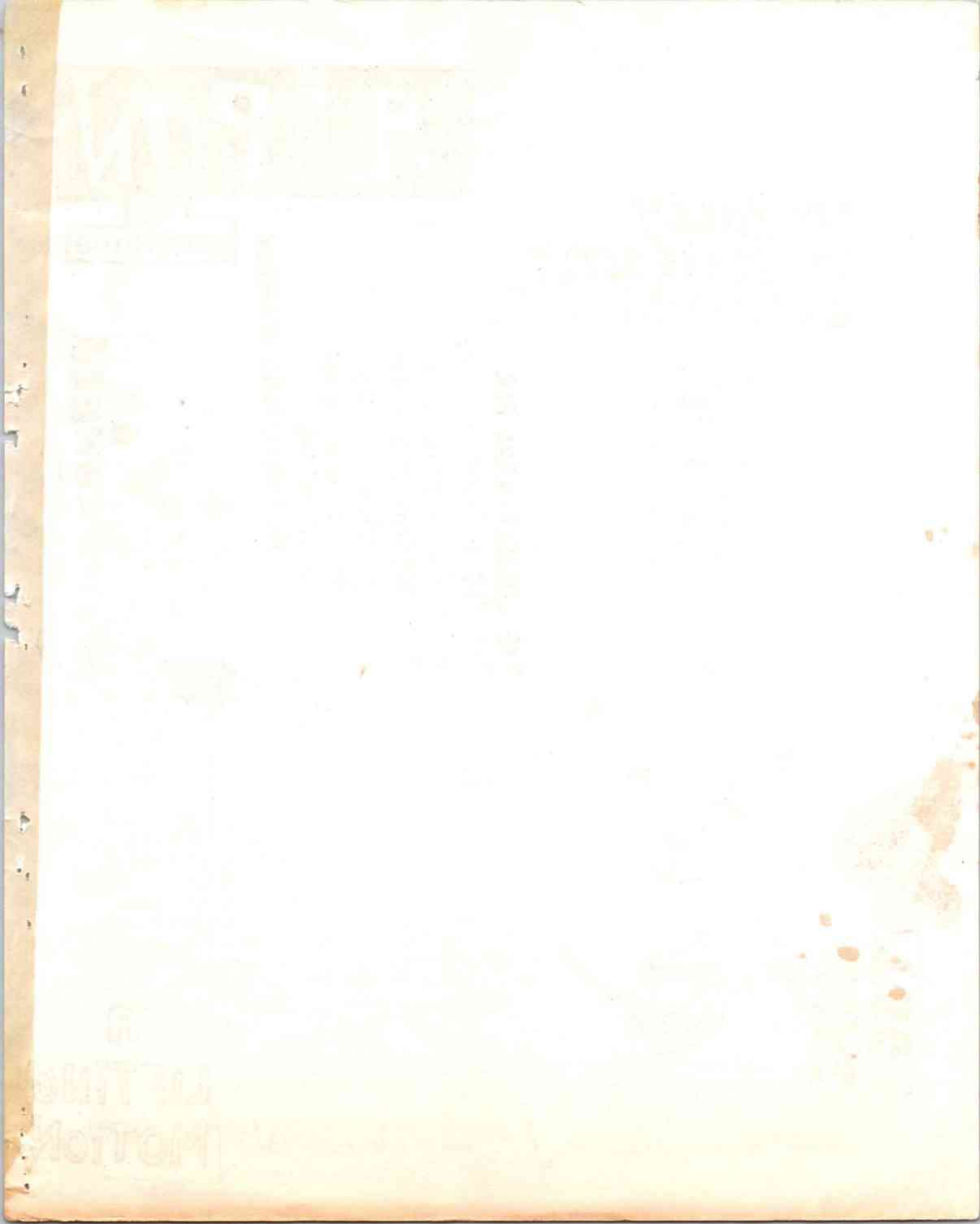
I've heard that some publisher or other is going to do a new Alfred Bester collection to tie in with his new novel. If it turns out to be as good as THE DARK SIDE OF THE EARTH, it'll be a winner. I'd not read this collection before, but some of the stories were familiar, such as "The Pi Man", about the man compelled to compensate - one of the best sf shorts ever written, in my view - and "The Men Who Murdered Mohammed" - time-travel with a difference, and full of Bester's unique humour. Bester must have the greatest consistency of any sf writer - which is why he's written so little, perhaps.

Whilst I could do with a lot more Bester, I could get on with a lot less of things like John Rankine's OPERATION UMANAQ. From what I've read about Rankine, this must be typical of his stuff - routine adventure stories. This one is more routine than most, and was about as gripping as a paralysed octopus. The Southern Hemisphere mob want to take over the Northern Hemisphere by starting a new ice age; our hero (called Mark Chevron, would you believe?) prevents this, of course. No attempt is made even to outline the society and motives of the S.H. The characters are too colourless even to be cardboard. The whole thing is shallow and very, very dreary.

As a complete contrast, Edgar Pangborn's DAVY is one of the best I've read this year. It's really a historical adventure set in a future, post-disaster world which is beginning to get itself back together again. It's written in flashback style, but so skilfully done that the pieces blend into one complete picture like a well-cut jigsaw. It's a real pleasure, too, to find a character who truly changes and develops during the course of a book. The last fifty pages tend to drag a little, which is a pity. Still recommended.

Almost equally enjoyable, in a different way, was JOYLEG, by Ward Moore and Avram Davidson. Despite the science-fantasy tag on the cover, it's really just a fantasy about a war-veteran (and how) who accidentally discovered a way to longevity. Two senators, one Republican, one Democrat, one male, the other female, discover a strange anomaly in the pension records, and from there on the plot develops, with deliciously light-handed humour, to a denouement which is almost fairy-tale-like in its neatness. I was really surprised that I enjoyed this so much, since Avram, along with Zenna Henderson and a few others, is one whose work has given me the screaming abdabs in the past. Maybe it's the influence of Ward Moore; I have his BRING THE JUBILEE lined up for reading soon.

If you can imagine a Lovecraftian plot with less adjectives and more science, you'll have a fair idea of Edward Andrew Mann's THE PORTALS; explorer discovers ancient book which turns out to have strange powers, etc. It starts off pretty well, but the ending seems weak, hurried and is unsatisfying. A pity, because with more care this could have been a creditable first novel.





# A VISUAL PUN

TOTALLY UNNECESSARY EXPLANATION

OR SOMETHING

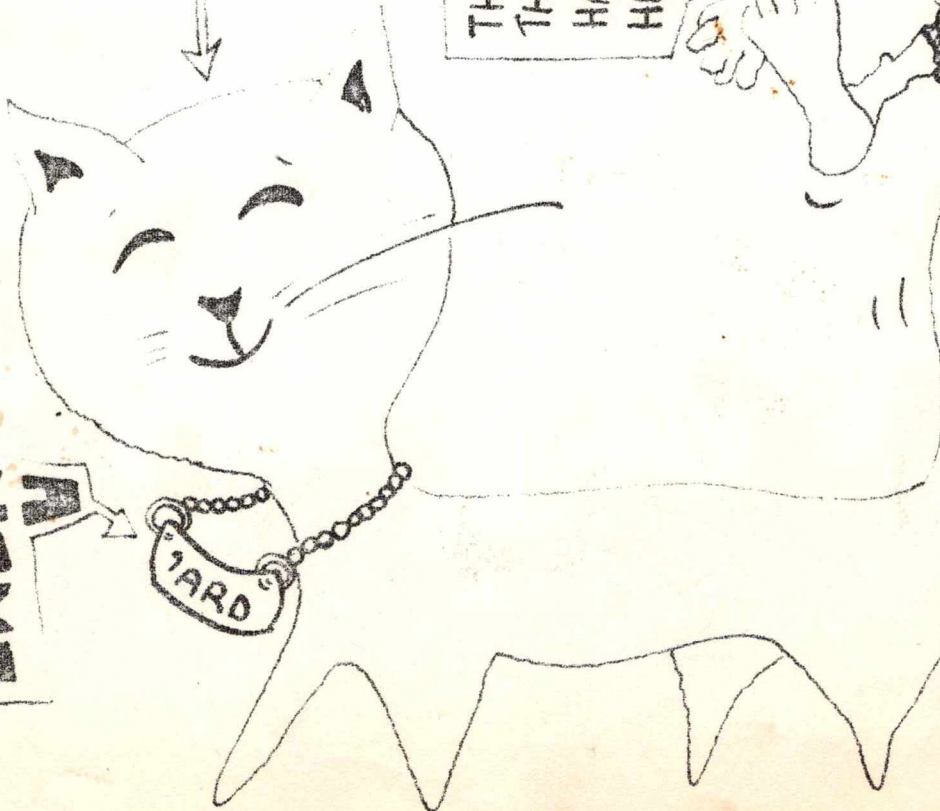
A PET

THE CORRECT NAME FOR THE PET IS "TIMES IS VERY HARD" BUT I HAVE USED HER ABBREVIATED FORM OF ADDRESS IN ORDER TO FIT IN WITH THE REST OF THE PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION

AN OWNER

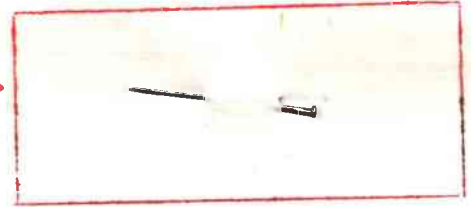


A NAME TAG



A LIFTING MOTION

INTRODUCTION: This is your free Reality Tester; it will enable you to test your own reality, and that of your neighbours, friends and pets. A miracle of modern engineering science, it contains no moving parts and is completely foolproof.



OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS: Grasp the bulbous end ("head") of the Tester firmly between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand, and withdraw it from the securing holes. To test your own reality, place the other end ("point") of the Tester against the heel of the left hand and exert sufficient pressure to penetrate the skin. If you feel a sharp, pricking sensation, this means you are both real and alive; if no sensation is felt, then either:

- a) you are real but not alive, or
- b) you are alive but not real, or
- c) you are neither alive nor real, in which case you are in a pretty bad state and should complain immediately to your local Citizens' Advice Bureau.

To test the reality of friends, neighbours and pets, a similar procedure may be employed, except that the Tester may be applied to any part of the testee's anatomy you can manage to get hold of. On testing, observe the subject's reactions: if muscular contractions are evident, and/or uncharacteristic words or cries are uttered, the subject is both real and alive. Otherwise, one of a), b) or c) applies, as for self-testing, above.

WARNING: The test should never be applied to: a) crocodiles, anacondas and similar reptiles, or to any species of similar inclination towards humans. Characteristic reactions may be observed, but you run the risk of losing your Tester and most of your body along with it.

- b) chairs, tables and other inanimate objects: your chance of obtaining any reaction is practically nil, and this could be misleading. If any reaction is observed, it means you have been on the stuff again and should wait until you come down before repeating the test.
- c) Alien Beings from the Outer Galaxies. Apart from the fact that their response patterns are unlikely to be characteristic, your approach with Tester in hand may be interpreted as an overt act of hostility, and could plunge our whole planet into an interstellar war of the first magnitude.
- d) Mike and Pat Meara. We can tell you they're not real anyway, so it's hardly worth the effort.

Your Tester should last almost indefinitely, and is guaranteed for life against malfunction (and madcap) due to fair wear and tear, but not against loss, however caused. If for any reason you are dissatisfied with your Tester, simply return it to this address, together with an explanation of the fault or problem and a cheque or Postal Order for £5 to cover handling charges, and a new Tester will be dispatched to you by return of post.

Happy Testing!