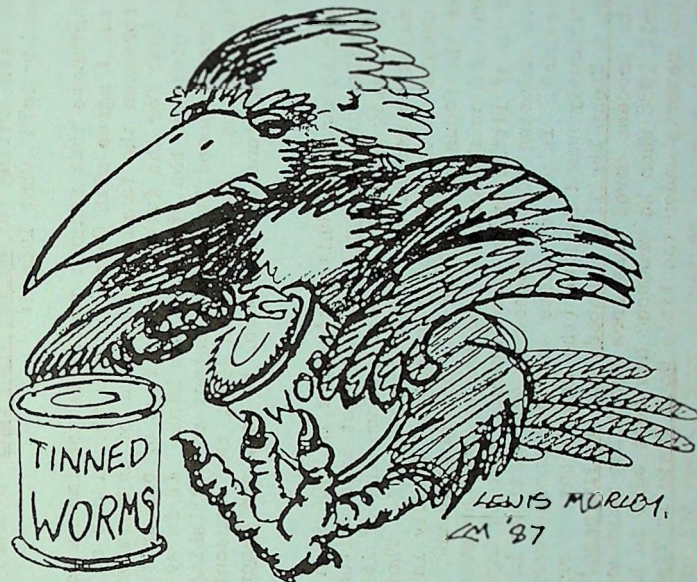

LARRIKIN 21, March 1989, is edited and published by Irwin Hirsh (26 Jessamine Ave, East Prahran, Victoria 3181, AUSTRALIA) and Perry Middlemiss (GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA). This fanzine is available for contributions, locs and fanzines in trade (one copy to each of us, please). Thanks go to Lewis Morley (art, this page), ATOM (art, last page), Pam Wells (UK agent) and Marc Ortlieb (mailing labels). We were going to make this issue a special Justin Ackroyd Appreciation Issue, but all we could find were people who don't appreciate Justin or people who can't put pen to paper (which is, in itself, a particularly appropriate way of appreciating Justin). If there is a red 'X' on your mailing label this is your last issue unless you Do Something

Note Irwin's CoA.

FANFUNDERY

- Irwin -

How many of you noticed the irony in the last line of the first paragraph of the most recent DUFF ballot form? Back in 1971 when he founded DUFF John Foyster was also a member of the Australia in 75 Worldcon bidding committee. As a member of that committee John spent some time devoted to trying to get the NASFiC removed from the Worldcon constitution, and now DUFF is to send a delegate to the 1990 NASFiC. In Australia the NASFiC is often viewed with some bemusement. On one hand we'd like to know why the World Science Fiction Society concerns itself with meeting the needs of the fans of just one continent. But at the same time we know that non-North American fans have a larger say in the existence of the NASFiC than do North American fans, for if non-NA fans don't bid for the Worldcon there is nothing North Americans can do about having their convention. All other 'bided' conventions, from the Worldcon to Corflu, from Westercon to the British Eastercon, are run to their own rules and form their own continuity, yet North Americans seem happy to allow their convention to be run to the rules of some other con and



larrikin

subjugate any sense of historical continuity. And importantly, none of those cons get held over when a bigger con is being held in the same country/region/interest that year. The Aussie Natcon was still held in the years when the Worldcon came Down Under. Sure, they were scaled down affairs compared to other years but they are still regarded as important parts of the fannish calendar and not to be passed over. The NASFiC tends to be regarded as not as important - I get the strong impression that there are many North Americans, even those who can't make it to an Aussie- or British- or Dutch-based Worldcon, who just don't regard it as their convention, that they are more likely to travel long distances to attend a Boskone or a Minicon than to attend the NASFiC. I don't like the NASFiC, as it is currently constituted, and I feel uncomfortable about DUFF sending someone to a NASFiC.

On the other hand, maybe my concern is misplaced and the result of a little joke from the DUFF administrators. They actually say the DUFF winner will attend the "U.S. National Convention" but there is no such convention. Or, maybe, the truth lies halfway along the continuum. They mean the NASFiC but the American Cultural Imperialism is there as a nod to past DUFF winner Marty Cantor.

NEVER MIND THE WIDTH, FEEL THE QUALITY

- Perry -

In the most recent issue of her fanzine, Blatant, Avedon Carol laments the slow entropic death of the fandom she grew up with and which

she has come to know and love. As she puts it: "I note with growing distress that of the faneds I discussed in the last issue of Blatant, few seem to be producing fanzines currently. However, Owen Whiteoak has only recently started producing his first zines since moving to London ... Shiffman has produced one item, and the newszines continue from Mike Glycer and Martin Easterbrook (at least the beat goes on somewhere). But the Nielsen Haydens seem to have dribbled away into pro-ac, Colin Hinz hasn't been heard from, Simon Ounsley's last publication is a dim memory, and so on. Even Marty Cantor has lost his obsession with putting out Holier Than Thou regularly (or at all). What's fandom coming to?" What indeed?

It's unfortunate that fanzine fandom is not immune to its fair share of low periods and I agree with Carol that in the middle of 1988 British fandom seemed to have forsaken the fanzine as a means of expression. But in all such lulls there is hope for the future in the form of one or two fanzines of quality which belie the state of the others of its kind. It is my experience that these fanzines are produced by someone intent on publishing a fanzine with style and energy, regardless. In Britain in 1988, the standouts were Pulp, edited by a diverse group of fans of whom Carol is one, and Kamera Obskura, produced by Owen Whiteoak.

I first became aware of Whiteoak's work in 1986 when I re-entered fanzine fandom via the publication of Larrikin. At that time Whiteoak was living in Edinburgh and was producing some of the best fan writing of its type anywhere. His forte is what might be described as "fanzine verite". That is, the reporting of fannish events as they actually happened, usually in the present tense with the author as the focus on one hand and hovering around the fringes like an omnipotent god on the other. Whether or not the events depicted occurred as reported is of little or no consequence, what is important is the style of the piece, the ordering of the scenes to gain maximum impact and the entertainment value provided. In all of these Whiteoak scores very highly. After ten issues of his variously named fanzine (the ones I have carry such names as Expensive, Dope, Sex & Cheap Thrills, Stampede and Skullnroses) Whiteoak moved to London and in the process moved away from producing fanzines. This sojourn lasted until April 1988 when he produced his best work in his continuing series of convention reports under the title Good Taste is Timeless (or Good Times are Tasteless): 23 pages of masterful work topped off by 8 pages of letter column.

It is simply one of the best pieces of fannish writing of its type that I've come across.

A short time after this Whiteoak began his current fanzine Kamera Obskura, publishing at a rate of about once a month with page-lengths varying from 6 pages to 14, simply duplicated (on as many different coloured pages as he can find) with few typographical errors. Which all goes to show that Whiteoak cares about his fanzines and attempts to put out the best product he can. The layout and presentation may seem old-fashioned with its lack of artwork or professionally printed card covers, but that does nothing to detract from the appeal of these fanzines. They are just too good to allow that to happen.

Which brings us to the subject of this article; a fanzine divorced from the Kamera Obskura run entitled The Stale Tinned Milk of Human Kindness. I emphasise the fact that this fanzine does not fit into Whiteoak's current title series due to its subject matter. Whiteoak has continued his fannish reporting style in KO but The Stale Tinned Milk deals solely with a destructive criticism of another fan-writer; namely Michael Ashley, the winner of the Nova Award for Best British Fanwriter of 1988.

Oddly enough I cannot remember ever having read anything by Michael Ashley. Which strikes me as a little strange. It should be safe to assume that if Ashley won a Best Fanwriter award for work published last year then I would have come across him at some time or another. If that's ever happened I can't remember it. I don't recall meeting him when I was in Britain either. In other words I wouldn't know Michael Ashley if I tripped over him. (A little explanation might be in order here. When Irwin and I publish Larrikin we request that fanzines in trade be sent to both of us. Unfortunately some editors find that either too arduous or just plain unacceptable. Whatever their reasoning, they send only one copy of their fanzines, usually to Irwin.)

In reviewing fanzines as in reviewing other things there are really only 3 things that need to be considered: style, content and presentation. (I say "only" with tongue in cheek. There are many other things that need to be considered but I put the point out that these are the big 3 and that the rest will follow on naturally from them.) I discussed the presentation of Whiteoak's style earlier; similar statements apply here. I've always thought that style was rather an amorphous term open to many interpretations and no definitive explanation. My dictionary describes it as a "characteristic mode of writing or speaking", which basically means everyone's got one it's just that some people use theirs better than others. Whiteoak has a natural flow to his writing which I've always found to be adequately suited to his subject matter.

It's the content where all the fun lies. Putting it simply Whiteoak doesn't like Michael Ashley; not his writing, his person or anything else about him. Calling him a "silly, bitter, twisted little boy" leaves little room for vacillation. But comments regarding Ashley as a person are incidental to Whiteoak's aim and are used mainly to reinforce his views on Ashley's fannish writings. Whiteoak states: "...Michael seems to spend a large part of every article he's ever written in sneering and insulting other people (usually other fans), and that in a particularly vicious and unpleasant way." The problem with making a statement like that is that it opens up the writer to the same sort of criticism. I'm certain Whiteoak realises that and is willing to take his chances.

The question remains then: Why bother? If this Ashley bloke is such a pain in the arse why waste time and energy putting him down? Why risk the trouble that will arise? Simple, from Whiteoak's point of view, because Ashley has now gained a level of acceptance and recognition (in the form of his Nova Award) which needs to be put into perspective. And that's fair enough. Any fan writer has to expect their work to be examined closely from time to time, to be criticised and to be totally dumped upon. It's the motives behind the

examination that need to be looked at. I believe that Whiteoak produced this fanzine for what he considers are the best of motives: to expose Michael Ashley for what he is. There are no sour grapes here (Whiteoak has won Nova Awards himself and doesn't need to climb over the backs of others to gain recognition). In fact, Whiteoak acknowledges his fannish transgressions of the past and realises that some such unintentional slip-ups are possible. He just feels that Ashley puts the boot in deliberately. My current problem is I don't know if that sentiment is valid or not and I believe that it sits at the heart of Whiteoak's article. The only way out is to find some of Ashley's work and read it.

Seven articles later (all borrowed from Irwin) I'm now starting to get some idea of what Whiteoak is on about. On page 7 of The Stale Tinned Milk he says: "It seems to me that there are two ways one should read a Michael Ashley article when considering it for publication. The first is to remove all the names which Michael has used ... and instead insert your own name, and those of the people close to you. Now, is it still as entertaining? Does it still have you rolling in the aisles? Or might it possibly be considered offensive?" That hits the nail on the head so I went back and reread the articles with that in mind.

The pieces in question range in age (ie publication date) from July 1985 to September 1988 and while Ashley improves as a writer over that time it is also interesting to note his increasing number of snide remarks and throwaway lines. These seem to culminate on two pieces from Lip: "My Last Convention" #3 March 1988, and "What I Did on my Holidays" #4 September 1988. The one overriding impression I got from these two articles is that Ashley basically doesn't like people very much. His Conspiracy piece ("My Last Convention") comes across as a litany of people he approves of and those he doesn't: Andrew Brown is cool because he owns a Butthole Surfers t-shirt (a favourite band of Ashley's), and Marty Cantor is "ludicrous" because of his haircut and fashion sense. It's easy enough to criticise people who are different but what's the point? A few cheap laughs is all.

Ashley's insular obsessions are a pity. Some of his earlier articles show he has a talent for observation and a style to present his work in an entertaining manner. I'm just sorry he doesn't pick and choose his subjects a little better.

Whiteoak's answer to Ashley is "to stop reading the rubbish he writes. ... Until people start telling me, 'Have you noticed that Ashley has stopped insulting people?' I'm not going to bother reading anything that carries his byline." I don't think I'll stop reading Ashley's work in the short term (as with a little judicious editing he could be quite good), the long term is a different kettle of fish.

FANDOM INC 5 Typing that list of Recommended Reading last issue I was struck with the thought that 1988 was a good year for the fannish reprint volume/one-shot. It was also a silent year for those
- Irwin - volumes for not much fanzine space has been given over to discussing what has come out. This is odd, given that such volumes don't inspire much in the way of letters of comment and therefore aren't published with the same motivating forces which inspire a faned to publish their fanzine. I'd imagine that publishers of special one-off publications want nothing more than to cover their costs and to see enough publicity so that this happens.

Terry Carr must be one of the most reprinted fanwriters we've had, as befits one of the most creative people to have contributed to the field. I have five volumes devoted to his fanwriting, two of which are recent additions— in an appropriate memorial to Terry Corflu 5 added The Portable Carl Brandon to the canon and reprinted The Incomplete Terry Carr. With the latter there is some

overlap with the 1986 volume Fandom Harvest, but it is not big enough to be a consideration for not buying TITC. Both TPCB and TITC are good, handy volumes to have and I thank Corflu 5 for their efforts in making them available. (It seems to me that the fanzine fans' conventions provide the perfect avenue for getting these sort of volumes into, or back into, print. The first Ditto published a collection of Toronto fanwriting and Corflu 6 has announced that it will be publishing a collection of Chuck Harris's writing. I hope that future fanzine fans' conventions explore the idea of similiar Publishing Projects, as in this way the convention is able to provide something both appropriate and a bit more lasting than a weekend of fun and frivolity.)

Fanthology 1986 came about in a roundabout way. For File 770 Mike Glycer wrote a lengthy overview of the fanzine scene of 1986 which centred around the themes of favourite fanzines and a dream anthology of favourite articles. With no page-length restrictions Mike was able to rank his twenty favourite articles, adding another twenty or so as honourable mentions. Somewhere along the way Dennis Virzi decided to publish a fanthology and Fanthology 1986 is the result. I'm not sure who made the final selection for this volume: Mike is listed as the editor and his article is used as the introduction, but three of the articles published aren't listed as among those 40 favourites. I read Mike's article with interest and amazement. As I looked down his list of favourite articles I often found myself nodding in agreement, but when he discussed his favourite fanzines I found very little correlation between his opinions and mine. I'm not sure what it is that can make Mike and I agree about articles by Chris Priest and Tim Jones yet disagree about the finer points of fanzines like Holier Thar Thou or Lan's Lantern.

Be that as it may, this collection is worth getting and I appreciate having some well-remembered articles collected together in one place. However it may have happened. I'm glad the contents were selected from a wider area than Mike's list's, for those three articles are among the strongest in the collection. There were two or three articles I thought weren't that great but given the volume's showcasing nature I can understand where their publication was coming from. There is only one article which I think doesn't stand up to reprinting. Strangely enough it is an article I admire - Patrick Nielsen Hayden's "Close Cap Tightly To Retard Thickening", which is reprinted from his Flash Point 8. Patrick's article is his response to the letters he'd received on the seventh issue of his fanzine, and taken away from his original thoughts and the response the reprinting loses something. I had to go back to Patrick's fanzines to read up on what had come before the article. I'd be interested in hearing how someone who didn't receive Flash Points 7 and 8 react to Patrick's article in Fanthology 1986.

There is a nice, neat appearance to Fanthology 1986 and Dennis Virzi has attempted to showcase fanzine art by reprinting ten drawings. All but one of these are full pagers and are a welcome addition to the volume, but the reprinting of the art also poses some problems. Now, for instance, do you highlight ATom's graphic skill, as ably displayed in Pulp? And unless an article selected was originally sent to an artist to be illustrated, you miss out on presenting the editorial skill involved in selecting the right artist for a piece of writing. And I think that Virzi made a mistake in leaning so much towards full page pieces of art, given that in any year the balance between full pagers and small illos is not 9:1. Smaller illos often display different artistic skills to full-pagers, and this aspect isn't reflected in this volume. For instance, four of the pieces come from Brad Foster's body of work. While I doubt that 40% of art published in 1986 came from Brad's pen, he was a prominent artist in 1986. However, I don't think the four pieces adequately display Brad's diversity. His full-pagers have an intensity about them which don't fully allow his zany sense of humour to come to the fore.

As a fan fund supporter I'm interested in reading fan fund trip reports. As a fan fund winner this interest is increased to the point where I want to see how

others have gone about writing their reports. And, as one of the two people who encouraged Jerry Kaufman to stand for DUFF, I was particularly interested in seeing Jerry's trip report. Not many people in Australia have had the opportunity to acquire a copy of Kaufman Coast to Coast, but I hope that this situation has more to do with only one or two copies having reached Australia than with anything else.

In a letter to Jerry I described the report as being "solid but unspectacular". By this I mean that he wrote an interesting, well-written report (the "solid") which followed a chronological telling (the "unspectacular"). For supporters of fan funds it is a worthwhile read. Don't go looking through the report for something controversial, for while Jerry was an 'official' representative of US fandom in 1983, he was his own man first. Jerry quietly takes us through his 1983 trip to Australia and I particularly appreciate Jerry's attempt to describe personality and situation, giving his own viewpoint to the events which went on during his trip. In this way this report fares well when held up for comparison to the trip reports of Jack Herman and Marty and Robbie Cantor, who were content to only tell us what they did on their trips but left it at that.

It is interesting to compare Jerry's approach in writing his report to that of Jack Herman and the Cantors. The latter three had their reports published very soon after their trips - within two years. Jerry's report was published five years after his return home and I think it is a better report for that gap. Jerry gave himself the time to consider and reconsider what he was trying to do with his report. For instance, between two of the drafts he decided to change the report from being told in the third person to the first person. Based on the two third person chapters published in one of Brian Earl Brown's fanzines I think the change has been for the best. But would this change have occurred had the report been published within a year or two of his return? It is with this in mind that I wish Jack Herman and the Cantors had also taken their time in writing their reports, for I think there is a trade-off between timeliness and readability happening here. Their reports came out soon after their trips, sure, but for all that the reports are just a catalogue of people and places. Their reports don't stand up to rereading as they miss out on a sense of life. It is my feeling that it is very easy to write reports such as these, as the hard part is the writing of the description and the opinion and the anecdote - the flesh from which we can form our mind-pictures.

Having favourably compared Jerry's report to some of the lesser examples of the art-form, the temptation is to make a comparison with some of the best examples of the fan fund trip report. But to do so would be unfair to why Jerry won DUFF. If fan fund winners were selected solely on their ability to write scintillating fanzine articles, of the sort which dazzle and shine, I could see reason for such comparisons, but fan fund winners win for any number from a variety of reasons. Other factors come into play when people vote in a fan fund - whether the candidates publish good fanzines, have contributed something to the convention scene, are fun to be around, etc. The simple fact is that if being a top notch writer of fanzine articles was the only criteria by which people voted in fan funds, most people would be voting Hold Over Funds. I don't think I'd be offending anyone if I said that none of the people who have won DUFF (yes, GUFF too) would've made their trips in such a situation.

When I think of those who wrote the great trip reports I'm also coming up with some of the names which would appear on a list of Fandom's Top Ten Writers. Walt Willis and Dave Langford, for example. Their trip reports are brilliant, shining examples of the form, but they are also great writers. If they didn't actually do so Walt and Dave could've made their trips on the body of their fanwriting alone. Jerry Kaufman didn't make his trip on that basis, and any comparison between his trip report and Walt's and Dave's comes down to one of innate writing ability. All three filled their reports with their view of what happened to them, giving us a picture into those two, three or whatever weeks of their lives. As we read through the reports we come away with the feeling that

the particular incidents were amusing or interesting, not because they said they were but because the authors took the time to show us they were. Where Dave and Walt shoot ahead of Jerry is in their superior prose style. If you read Jerry's report looking for an interesting, careful description of his trip you'll be well pleased with the investment of your time.

(Fanthology 1986 is available for US\$3 from Dennis Virzi, 618 Westridge, Duncanville, TX 75116, USA. The Incomplete Terry Carr, The Portable Carl Brandon and Kaufman Coast to Coast are available for US \$5, \$2 and \$6 from Jerry Kaufman, C/- Serconia Press, PO Box 1786, Seattle, WA 98117, USA.)

LETTERS FROM OUR MATES (issue 18) - compiled by Perry -

Given the timing and subject matter of Larrikin 18 (drinking stories leading up to end of year celebrations) I would have expected a greater response. On the other hand maybe the subject and timing explains everything. Pamela Boal seems to think that pubs should cater equally for drinkers and eaters.

"The Fly" and "Down Among the Dead Men" are excellent examples of the reasons why I prefer to buy in for my friends who do not share my non-drinking vice (just about all of them but Hazel Langford) and entertain at home. Fortunately my espoused partner Derek does not share my vice and is thus knowledgeable regarding liquid refreshment and if he needs up-dating on more exotic drinks our daughter and youngest son have served in cocktail bars. While I have no use (no great objection either) for the basic commodity of public houses or bars I have found a few to be superior to cafes for food. One hostelry situated in a tiny coastal village of North Wales nearly put Derek off steak for ever more. He felt he would never again be able to match the steak for quality and preparation, let alone price. My favourite bar meal comes from a cocktail bar in the Algarve. We spent a few of our holiday evenings there during the Happy Hour; Derek because he wished to sample most of the cocktail list and couldn't manage more than two at a session, me for the club sandwiches. Those sandwiches, served in a basket, are a total delicious meal. I got the exact recipe from the bar and no I'm not sharing it. On those rare occasions when the weather is good enough to set the mood, we sit in the garden and I serve a Zombies' Club Sandwich to my friends instead of a more traditional dinner.

A "Zombies' Club Sandwich"; I can relate to that. Mike Glicksohn is a person who always seems to find somewhere interesting to visit when overseas, though maybe it's mainly a case of the "grass being greener..."

One of the advantages to being a fannish overseas visitor to Britain is that one tends to be guided to above-average pubs by locals who have already done the screening process and know where the good ambience, good beer and good food is to be found. Another advantage is that to most North Americans any British pub is such an improvement over the traditional local beer hall that we tend to drink in them through rose-coloured glasses which improve the flavour of the beer, sparkle up the ambience and add to the taste of the food. The worst pub I've ever been to in Britain (a colourless place out near Heathrow which may have the distinction of being the only pub I've drunk in without noting the name of) was still a tolerable experience for me although it would probably have been appalling to Martin Tudor.

While one can only have sympathy for Ms Mills' poor brother he really didn't get off that badly. I have a fannish friend who returned home from a con in Niagara Falls to find that thieves had stolen \$5000 worth of stereo and electronic equipment. The next night he inadvertently left some aluminum pot on the stove and the resulting fumes killed all his birds. Two days later his former-but-not-yet-divorced wife slipped in from out of town and cleaned out about \$3500 from their account. As I told him, it could have been worse - it could have been me!

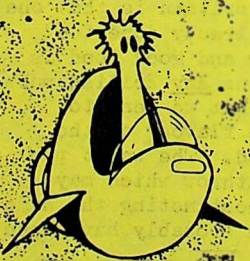
Less a case of "there but for the grace of God go I", as "thank God it wasn't me", and an example of how there is always someone with a tale longer and worse than yours. I've always thought luck (bad or good) was generally a matter of timing; that is, being in the right place at the right, or wrong, time. Harry Warner, Jr has his bad luck all figured out - ever the observer rather than the participant.

Robyn Mills' sad and picaresque story made me realize how fortunate I've been in recent months. One disaster after another has narrowly failed to zero in on me. For instance, several weeks ago I was waiting in the town square for a bus, standing some distance from the waiting shelter because of the smokers who were polluting it. So I was quite near the point at which the bus pulled in to the curb and if I'd taken a few steps to it immediately, I would have been assaulted by the street lamp post which the bus's protruding rear view mirror knocked down with a tremendous crash. (I'd hesitated so I wouldn't get on the bus until after the smokers and could choose a seat where the afterglow of their fumes wouldn't be too bad.) A few days later I was trying to bolt together a set of steel shelving in the cellar when one of the shelves suddenly animated itself, swung around in my arms as if a poltergeist had jumped on the far end, and instinct caused me to jump away just in time to avoid serious injury. The edge managed to inflict a deep cut on one finger but my throat remained unpenetrated and that was the most important thing. (I haven't touched that shelving since, although it has shown no signs of life on the cellar floor; I plan to wait until the coldest day of winter to resume work on its assembly in the hope that whatever has gotten into it will be sluggish from the low temperature.) Just two days ago I decided to take the bus to a nearby shopping mall instead of driving because it was raining hard and I might have an accident on the wet pavement; sure enough, the bus passed a multi-vehicle pileup a half-mile from the mall where I might have been involved since there were indications it was a quite fresh and recent accident.

WAHF: Taral, Pascal Thomas, Brian Earl Brown (twice), Robert Lichtman, Janice Murray, Mike Glicksohn (again), Sue Thomason and Harry Warner, Jr (again). Some of these letters will appear next issue. Till then, take care.

PERTH IN 94

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