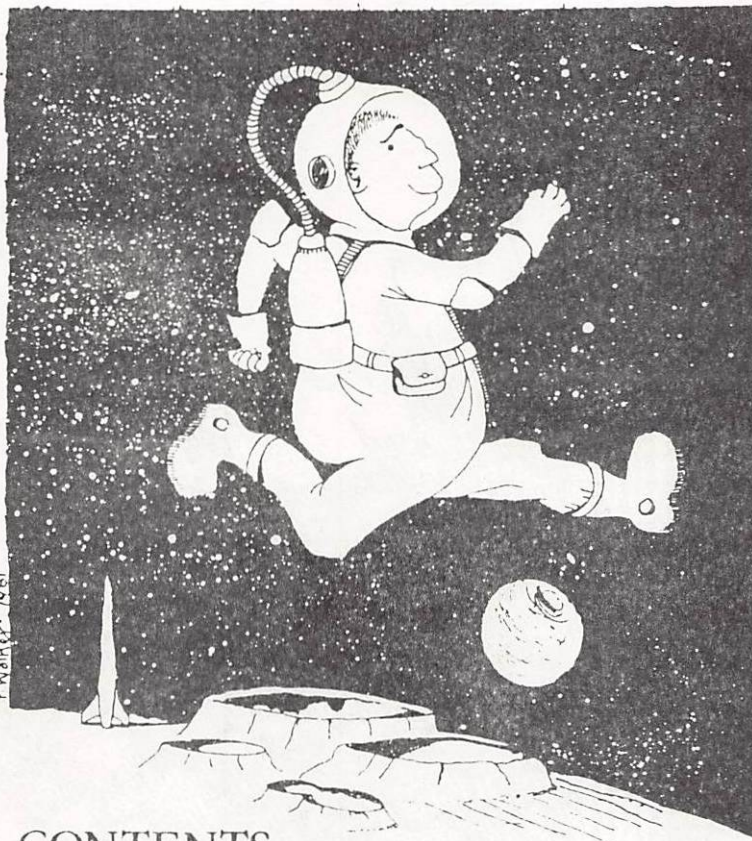




Joseph Sude



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MATRIX 44

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1982

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EDITED FOR THE LAST TIME

BY

GRAHAM JAMES

& LINDA STRICKLER

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With Effect from This Issue

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BSFA OFFICIAL WARNING: The Cartoons in this fanzine are likely to permanently damage your mental stability and wash your brain in the process. Please read through rose-tinted spectacles only.

PARTING-SHOT ADVANCE WARNING: *If you've been following these contents you may have realised by now that this is the final issue under the stewardship of Graham and Linda. Rather than bid farewell in a clumsily composed editorial, we have preferred to make our exit on a more personal level throughout the letters column. Should you wish to keep in touch in any way - you know our address and we will continue to put out our own fanzine, DON'T THINK ONCE - soon to be re-titled SLUG; see you when it's wet on the ground in October, provided you know where to look.*

Many thanks to all contributors and silent readers; please give the new editors a chance before you hang them.

ARTWORK CREDITS

JOSEPH BURDEN - COVER; PETE WALKER - 2; PETE LYON - 4, 5, 6; JOHN KERR - 6, 26;
NIK MORTON - 8, 9; SHEP KIRKBRIDE - 24, 28; D. WEST - 29, 30, 31, 32, 33;
PHILL PROBERT - Back Cover.

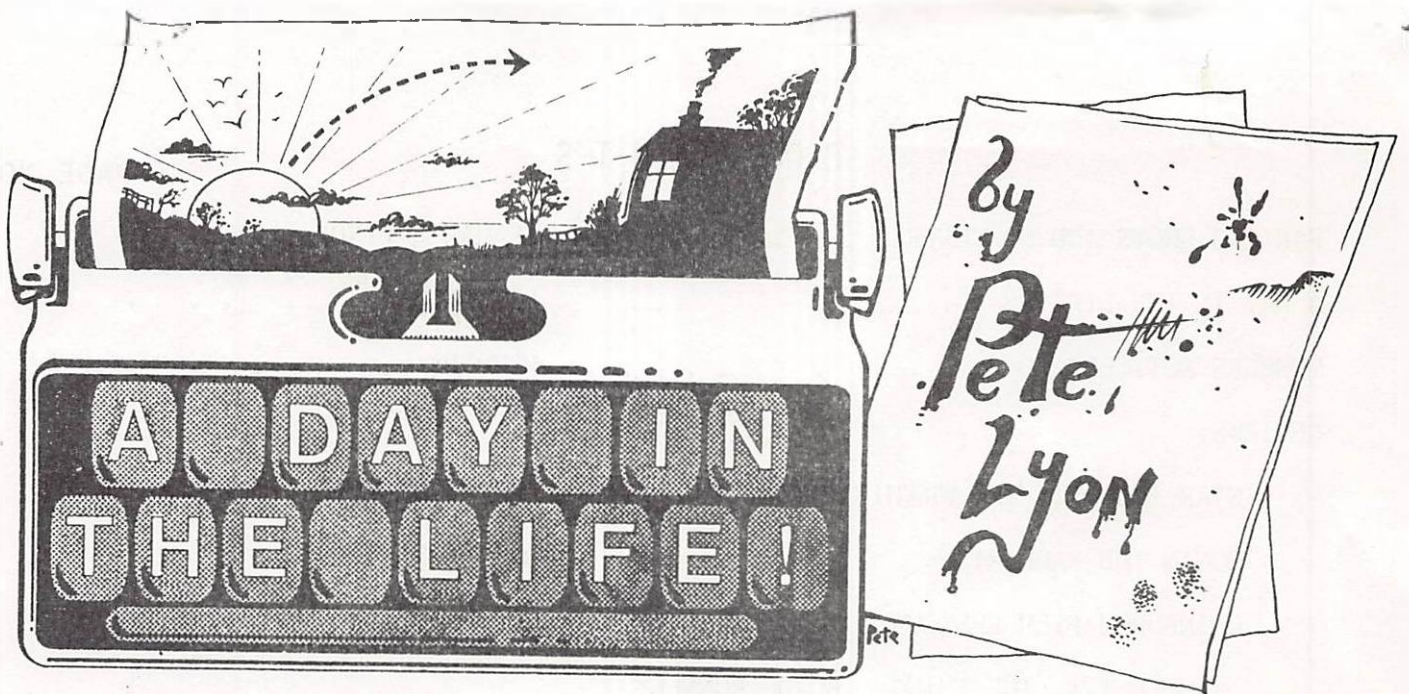
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DEADLINE FOR MATRIX 45 IS UNKNOWN, BUT TRY NOT TO GET IT TO ALAN AND ROCHELLE ANY LATER THAN NOVEMBER 14; THEIR WARM NEW HOME IS LOCATED AT 22 SUMMERFIELD DRIVE, MIDDLETON, MANCHESTER M24 2WW (061)653 6293



This article is late because my days are full of Late. Full but not terribly eventful; I've too much to do and very little money to do it with. There is no typical day. I'm usually wakened by the delivery of my pint of Elixir by my very lovely Common Law Housekeeper and her Dependant, who are preparing themselves for another session in the real world.

There you have it! ... The nub of my problem, they all start like that. Does not every freelance writer of 'Day in the Life' waken to the same scenario of tea, housework, bog, fanzines with a whole section in the middle devoted to a discussion of the battle betwixt Apathy and the Will to Work, then more

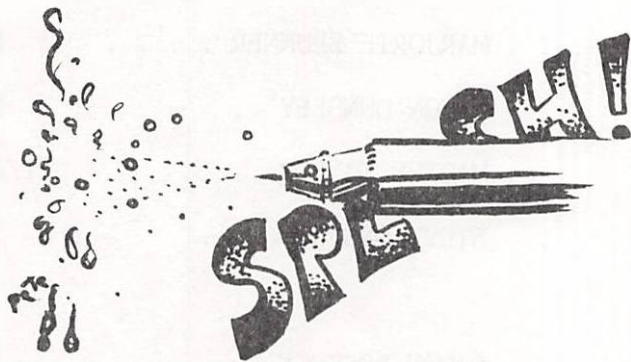
tea/beer/dope then variations on tea/beer/dope, cooking, letters, tv/book/cinema, yet more tea/beer/dope then beer, sex, dope, sleep and so on *ad nauseum*.

Method: select the content then cram it into a theme....the problem with the writing of this article appears to be merely one of style.

Let's see now....We've had the Literati approach: country cottages with iron ranges, sunset views and the noble savages our neighbours, the plain folk

of Yorkshire. Secluded, soulful **communication** with the world of books and Fine Things. Wait a minute, I've got some Art Books! I could go on about what a deeply serious activity painting is ... it could get really exciting talking about the sheer grind involved in doing apparently simple things. The skill, concentration and hard graft could be hacked out into some edifying piece for sure.

This could be easily blended with the No-Nonsense approach full of quietly humorous low-key descriptions of how sometimes I knock over my paint (a muffled titter runs around fandom) or accidnetally dip my brush into my (wait for it) tea! (sustained chuckles). I may mention that I sometimes make silly noises to myself (Tee hee) or pick my nose (loud laughter) and once I leaned back on my chair and fell right over backwards (screams of hilarity, general pandemonium in the ranks, people with weak hearts seek medical aid etc etc).



Sitting at my desk cultivating piles is pretty boring, let's face it!

There's the wacky approach: zany goings on with the loveable Artist. Rough Diamond with a Heart of Gold. I could waffle on about our picturesquely eccentric friends and our many madcap adventures, or do a few humorous thumbnail sketches.

Next I might consider the Apathy approach ... all the chortlesome, petty, ordinary little things that distract me from my work, and the silly excuses I make to myself for avoiding being creative. This demonstrates I'm human after all. Speaking of distractions, I moved house recently so the old Trials and Tribulations approach would be easy. The curiosities of the legal system; the horrors of big sums of money not to mention the Removal Anecdotes and Old House jokes proper ... all grist to my mill.

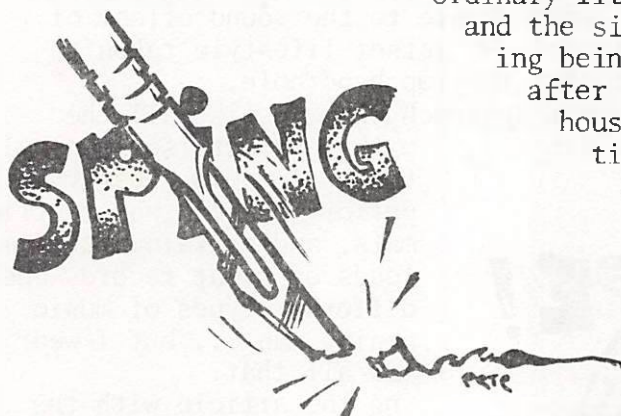
What about the Political approach I hear you cry ... this is good, but then again, perhaps not so good, for who can tell? People nod sagaciously or get miffed 'cos

you dragged in the subject at all. It's easy enough to be funny about the NHS or the Dole Queue ... three million laffs, no problem. I could get all Kafkaesque to show how well read I am, and take you by the hand down the labyrinth of the DHSS. They've got an enormous file on me and ask me questions like, "Tell me, Mister Lyon, why has the dependant child you are claiming for a different name to that of his ... er ... mother and what is his relation (if any) to your adopted daughter from a previous marriage." And then go all honest and Reveal All about my squalid private life.

Ah! but I go to work too! This is always a safe bet. The Job approach is a doddle 'cos no-one catches you out and you can make things up or lie about those aspects of your employment of which you are ashamed. I can see it now, needle-sharp vignettes of the foolish people engaged in pointless tasks that are my work mates. The idiotic oneupmanship and the obviously pompous Immediate Superior. It would be all too easy to demonstrate to one and all how I buck the system, subtly laying bare the hypocrisy and inefficiency of my colleagues by my Zen-like enigmatic activity and witty private thoughts on *Sotto Voce* voice over.

Of course, there's the "I'm-Not-Very-Mechanically-Minded-Being-As-I-Am-Far-Too-Arty-Farty" approach. It almost goes without saying the hilariously high garage bills I've had to pay of late. All the funny things that I've ballsed up trying to DIY them. The mirth-inducing descriptions of my attempts to order a nondescript part which evidently is being hand-crafted in Kyoto out of a solid block of Ali by some Venerable National Treasure using only a sharpened chopstick and a bamboo file, and be personally delivered home in Mrs T's handbag. Rust is your only man for this approach: "Like flakes of some preternaturally heavy sepia snow the rust wafted down as the Mechanic probed the secret, quiet places of my chassis."

Graham ("insert some gratuitous over-simplification") James suggested the Fanartist approach *viz*: loads of little drawings of me and mine at work and play. Yeah ... good one! I could spend ages on it and do all these crazy layouts and stick 'found objects', say, paint-tube labels, to the page. Maybe do cute caricatures of the leading lights of Leeds Fandom and make reference to their legendary fannish foibles all done with neat hand-written one liners in



the best possible taste. Better still: the Letting-it-all-hang-out-vengeance-is-mine-sayeth-the-BNF-approach! I could do a real Backstab number on my so-called friends. A Radio KTF short (second hand) wave static broadcast live from Paranoia City!! But what would people think of me?

Let's see now ... that seems to be it; apart, that is, from the easy option of the OIT approach. Wildly exaggerated descriptions of transatlantic Wheeling and Dealing. The seemingly sober sensible assessment of the real-politik marketplace and how I plan to make a pseudonymous mint. I could go into my correspondence conducted with well-known people to the sound effect of the dull thudding to the floor of Proper Nouns. My jetset lifestyle taken to extremes as I indulge in a tedious list of over-the-top hyperbole.

Or maybe do the It's All Been Done Before approach where I list all the obvious options in a but still-smiling ply that I'm dead suited by clichéd for-very With It and have listen to all these because it's all hap-my heart on my sleeve

I reckon on end-uitra neat Surreal be as clear and pat those things where start Time-loop wise. the Bigfoot!! Bingo!

at my paint-bespattered folding table. Surrounded by books and bottles, tubes and telephones, writing about how I can't think of anything to write about because my days are so full of late.

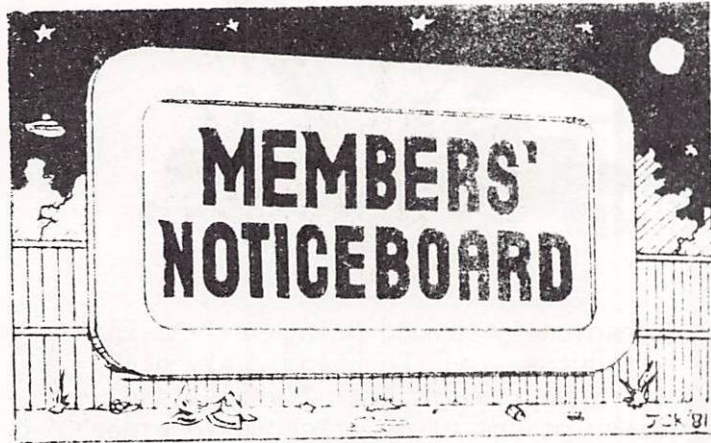


pithy, Streetwise, cynical tone. I could clearly im-prior 'cos I'm not restric-mats, and explain that I'm loads of great records and different types of music pening man ... but I wear for all that.

ing the article with the approach; I would try to as possible and do one of the end goes back to the Right! Cue the Sousa and There I am sitting glumly

###

Pete (sorry about the quotes) Lyon is, well, err, what can you say about the finest painter and second-best cartoonist in fandom? Pete is particularly well-known for being an unemployed artist and Liverpudlian. He won the Ken McIntyre Memorial Award for his artwork in 1981 and will be fan GoH at RaCon next year.



I should remind members (because I have been asked) that this service is free of charge; provided you are not a commercial operator, you can insert your request, plea, advert, etc in this column by writing to the editorial address. Please quote your membership number, if you can.

The completed questionnaires for the survey being conducted by P. Holdsworth of members' preferences in sf amounted to 101 replies. The survey is now a collaboration between P. Holdsworth and Ken Lake. Progress so far is that the results have been tabulated and an analysis will be carried out using the tabu-

lations followed by a summary. The final results should be ready for publication in either *Matrix 45*, or the *Vector* accompanying it. Many thanks to all who co-operated. P. Holdsworth, 6 Ruskin Grove, Deighton, Huddersfield, Yorkshire HD2 1HR.

Dave Rowley, 11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST1 5JG Tel. (0782) 271070 would be very interested to hear from anyone who possesses a video recording of "Stargazey On Zummerdown".

URGENT & WANTED: A copy of *VECTOR 104*. Will pay 1 pound. Needed for library in Canada. Write: Cy Chauvin, 14248 Wilfred, Detroit, Michigan 48213 USA. This particular issue of *Vector* has sold out which is why we were not able to get one from Roy.

REVIEWS

STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN Dir. Nicholas Meyer

REVIEWED BY MARTYN TAYLOR

'Come Gather round Trekkies,
Wherever you roam,
And admit that the cult
Around you's been blown.
Gene'd better start swimming
Else you'll sink like a stone.
'Cos the times they have a changéd.'

(Apologies to Mr Dylan)

'Star Trek: The Motion Picture' was a sad letdown to all but the most blinkered trekkies. It was a silly, silly picture and even though it washed its face at the box office, the Star Trek producers cannot have been confident that it was the first in a long series of money-spinning films. Comparison with its progenitors, 'Star Wars' and 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind', were not kind. It seems obvious now that, in the after math, those producers went away, had a long think about their golden-egg-laying goose, and decided that they ought to go back to first principles. 'Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan' is an acknowledgment that 'Star Trek' is first and last a television operation. It is small-scale, personal and tied to the formula limitations of television series production. It was in that environment the show was born, and it is in that environment it functions best. They have taken one of the standard formulae of the television shows - Kirk is given an exotic human adversary, female interest from one of his girls in every port, and the whole thing is wrapped up in true 'Perils of Pauline' style by a display of Spock's impeccable logic - and pumped it up to feature film length. In fact, they have made a sequel to a fifteen-year-old episode of the television series involving a 20th Century homo superior, Khan, played by Ricardo Montalban.

And do you know? It works. And I bet it works even better on video.

I don't know how much point there is in detailing the plot. You've all seen the film by now, anyway. Still, here goes. Khan and Co have been marooned by Kirk on a planet that has since been shifted out of orbit by a local calamity. You can tell he's homosuperior, because he is still alive and his acolytes are still young, blonde and good looking. Chekov has been promoted to the Starship *Reliant*, but he is still a blunderer, and when the *Reliant* happens along, Khan hijacks the starship, pops off to steal the Genesis Device - which can put life where before there was only death, and has been developed by Kirk's ex with their son in tow - and then sets about revenging himself on Kirk. As might be expected, he doesn't - quite - but the donouement involves Spock making the ultimate sacrifice. He is buried in space with all the mawkish sentiment that the ever-eager hams of the *Enterprise* can manage, a baggage sendoff from Scottie in full highland regalia.

There is no doubt that 'Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan' is not quite the sick makingly huge budget blockbuster that seems to be *de rigueur* for the scifi film course of late. It does not attempt to give any answers to the question of life, the universe and everything. The special effects it uses are very modest, and the best of them are still the beautiful shots of the *Enterprise* which have been transplanted from the first film. As a consequence of modest ambitions, most of the targets are hit. The film sets out to be no more than escapist entertainment in the tradition of the television show, and fine escapist fun it is.

It is common knowledge that Leonard Nimoy has been trying to jump ship for quite some time, and he does appear to have succeeded this time. After all, not even 'Star Trek' can bring a man back from the dead, can they? Except his coffin is seen on the burgeoningly verdant planet that has been conjured out of nothingness by Khan's last, desperate use of the Genesis Device which we already know can create life where there was none. To be honest, I have a vision of a trailer for 'Star Trek III' in which a hand emerges from that ebony catafalque and the titles roll, 'Star Trek III: Spock the Impaler'.

We should be so lucky!

So the trekkies can sleep easy. The machine is back in business. There can be little doubt that we are about to see a stream of modest-budget films on the 'Star Trek' formula, all designed to exploit the video market. Dangerous Visions they aren't, but there is a place for carefully calculated, guaranteed content products. Look at MacDonalds! So leave your brain in your toothmug, get yourself down to your local picture palace and don't be afraid to smile.

I'll finish, as I began, with Mr Dylan, approximately.

"Don't think twice, it's alright ... as far as it goes."

CONAN THE BARBARIAN

Dir. John Milius 125 minutes

REVIEWED BY MARTYN TAYLOR

Back in the really old days life was simple, simpler even than in the good old days. Men lived side by side in peace and harmony. That is, until they met each other. Then they killed each other. Our hero, young Conan, has the very Eton of contemporary education, seeing his parents slaughtered before his very eyes. What better start could a young boy ask? After that he was taken into slavery where he grew up under a regime of relentless, mindless, back-breaking drudgery. No wonder he grew up into a big - a *very* big - strong boy, the sort of boy who attracted the eye of a passing fight promoter. After a distressingly slow start in the fight game our boy came good, and made himself world champion in that literally murderous pursuit, at which point he was set free by his mentor. At that time in his life the not-quite-so-young Conan had only one thing on his mind, to kill the bastard who murdered his parents. He eventually succeeded in that desire, at some bloody length.

No-one will go to see 'Conan the Barbarian' expecting dialogue of Shakespearean standard, or real human characters, or complex plotting, or genuine insights into the human condition. The 'Conan

books are the literary (?) equivalents of a Motorhead song, breakneck, energetic and such a relief when they end; and there is no doubt that the film will attract the headbangers amongst us. Strangely, though, it is not really a gory, or even a particularly violent film, at least by comparison to some of the serious films at present on release. The genuinely violent film appals because recognizably real people are abused, and there are no real people in 'Conan the Barbarian'. All we see are crowds of uncharacterised puppets falling over in a giant game of 'Who dies best' with lashings of stage blood. Certainly no comparison to 'Quest for Fire' - which is oddly similar in look quite often - this is virtually a non-violent film!

Director John Milius is one of the Coppolla/Spielberg generation of film-makers whose creed is that the image is everything (which is odd, in that Milius began his film career as a script writer of some literary and dramatic ability, cf. 'The Life and Time of Judge Roy Bean' and 'Jeremiah Johnson') and like his contemporaries he provides a series of set pieces that stagger the imagination and ravish the eye. The film skips from steppe to desert to frozen forest to mountain city, but the scenes which linger are the giant mill wheel to which the boy Conan is enslaved, the lone tree on which the adult Conan is crucified, and Thulsa Doom's mountain of power. These are all epic in scale, but not so much so that they are incredible, and in this is one of the secrets of Milius' really rather clever success with admittedly unlikely material. He has executed a most effective deception of scale. As I have said, the script demands that Conan be a big man. Arnold Schwarzenegger has, as the saying goes, muscles in places where most of us haven't even got places, and he is not so much out of proportion as so many musclemen are. He cuts a statuesque figure (even if he does sometimes totter on the brink of a 'worker's heroic' parody), but Milius has him pitted against opponents who are precious little smaller than he is. James Earl Jones plays Thulsa Doom, and he would have to stoop to get through more than a few doors, while his two lieutenants - on sabbatical from the Valhalla Chapter of the Hells Angels by the looks of them - are both bigger than he is. In this company, Conan literally is no big thing. The object of Milius' exercise is to indicate that in those days heroes, and villains, were neither thin on the ground, nor did they need to wear white ten gallon hats to stand out in a crowd, except a crowd of other heroes. Milius does everything for the immediate visual impact in this film, although it must be said that, splendid and gorgeous as many of the images are, there is nothing behind them to repay closer study. What you see is what you get.

Some fairly peurile accusations have been made about the so-called 'dubious' politics behind this film. Milius has been accused of making a fascist tract. Undoubtedly Neitsche was the patron saint of the Nazis, and Milius does preface his film with an inane quotation from the half-baked philosopher. The fact of the matter is that this is a distinctly tongue-in-cheek gesture by Milius towards the infantile hordes of the Conan cultists. The Conan he portrays is a virtually intellect-free flesh machine, a million miles removed from the Neitschean *ubermensch* who necessarily combines brain with brawn. Possibly the silliest claim made about the film is that it is a remake of 'Triumph of Will'. Truth to tell, that is just about the only film from which Milius doesn't borrow! In the opening sequence there are echoes of 'The Ten Commandments', 'Little Big Man', 'The Searchers', 'Soldier Blue', 'Taras Bulba', 'The Vikings' and the Milius scripted, much under-rated Robert Redford film 'Jeremiah Johnson', and every sequence in the film raises its own echoes but never so loud that they become insistent. The resonances only serve to add to the impact.

This is an enjoyable film, but I did have a hankering for the actors to act rather than pose. Arnold Schwarzenegger can act, as may be seen in 'Pumping Iron' and 'Stay Hungry', but he gets more screwings than lines in this film. Not that it matters, really, Acting is not the name of this game, action is, and action is what we get in torrential quantities.

EDINBURGH: THE 36TH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF SCIENCE FICTION

E.T.: THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL IN HIS ADVENTURE ON EARTH REVIEWED BY JIM DARROCH

Dir. Steven Speilberg Music: John Williams 115mir



This was the film chosen to open the Festival and it sure looked as if it would be the perfect way to set it in motion. E.T. has already become a cinematic legend, supposedly reducing hard-bitten movie men to tears when it was shown at Cannes earlier this year. In purely monetary terms, this film is now the most successful ever made (this does not take inflation into account - a better guide would be bums in seats). This in itself is quite remarkable, as it means that wonder-boy Spielberg now has four films in the top-ten money-spinners (Jaws, ESK, Raiders . . .).

The plot line of E.T. is pretty straightforward. An alien survey ship lands on Earth (the US of A, as usual) and the crew disembark and proceed to take the usual plant samples, but they are soon discovered by the local population, which includes humans. Rapid departure is thus forced upon the creatures and in so doing, they are forced to leave one of their own number behind, to its pretty obvious horror. Fortunately, the alien is eventually found by a bunch of kids, who then

attempt to conceal and protect it. Meanwhile, ... the Authorities are on their way, and they don't look nice.

It doesn't particularly sound like any sort of a recipe for a great film, does it? Well, Spielberg proves everyone wrong and does produce a great film.

E.T. scores right from the start with some dazzlingly beautiful photography, which presents Earth as an alien planet - i.e., as a new and wonderful sight, with lurking, nameless horrors. The photography plays a part in the general atmosphere of the story, as much of it is filmed as from a child's viewpoint with the adults in the first half shown in dark and very menacing silhouette. The two most obvious areas of possible failure could have been (a) the depiction of the kids and (b) the preservation of the E.T. itself. Spielberg and his scriptwriter were obviously very aware of these possible pitfalls as they have avoided the terrible Disneyesque type of children and consequently, they are not your usual bunch of spoiled brats, but are nicely drawn characters in their own right. Similarly with the creature. For the film to work at all, it had to be good. In fact, it's not just good but bloody brilliant. The designer is Carlo Rambaldi (as in CE3K) and he has managed to produce an extraordinary entity that not only looks real, but convinces to the extent that I wouldn't be too surprised to meet it tomorrow. "E.T." is capable of superb facial and limb movements and is very nearly the most believable character in the film. The way the alien is used is particularly enjoyable, as it is not presented as simply a type of clever dog, but as a highly intelligent being in its own right.

The Disney studios must really be kicking themselves, as at last the film that they have always been trying to make, has been made...but by someone else! E.T. incorporates elements of Peter Pan, The Wizard of Oz, the last reel of CE3K and all of Mary Poppins, but more important, it truly conveys a "sense of wonder". It manages to pull its audience through the full range of emotions, so much so that spontaneous applause broke out in the 3,000 audience at this first commercial European showing. If anyone can leave the theatre with dry eyes after seeing this film, they are a better man than me.

E.T. is a classic example of everything working out to perfection: script, photography, music (superb J.W. yet again), acting, effects and direction - and it should most definitely be seen in a large, busy cinema, which will provide an experience that video/tv never can.

E.T. opens in Britain in December. Book now.

THE THING Dir. John Carpenter Music: Ennio Moricone 108 mins. REVIEWED BY JIM DARROCH

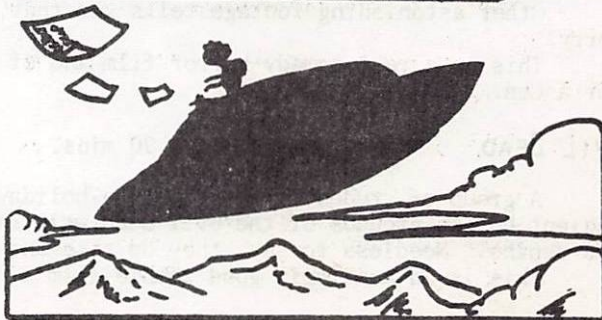
It must be purely fortuitous that the Festival managed to come up with two such radically different approaches to the "alien in our midst" situation, as is represented by this film and E.T. While E.T. is a delightful fantasy, this is a violent nightmare. THE THING is the only horror film that has actually managed to horrify me, for the special effects by Rob Bottin (of 'Howling' fame) are quite awsomey horrible.

If you don't already know, this film is a sort-of remake of the classic 1951 Howard Hawks produced movie, which was itself taken from J.W. Campbell's story, "Who goes there?". Carpenter's version is certainly closer to the original novella, but whether or not it's an improvement is another matter. I can see why Carpenter wanted to film this story (apart from the fact that he is devoted to '50's sf movies), as it offers a situation that could well have been made up specifically for him, i.e., a plot by numbers...100,000 years ago, a flying saucer crashes into the ice of Antarctica; in 1982 a Norwegian survey team digs it out. All does not go well, as you might imagine.

The film opens with a superb sequence as a helicopter chases a husky over the snowy wastes, loosing off a barrage of rifle shots as it goes (the helicopter, that is). The dog runs into the US Antarctic base, the helicopter lands and out come the crew of two with their guns blasting away, still after the dog. Unfortunately, one of the Americans is hit by their wild shooting, so provoking retaliation which results in the death of the Norwegians and the destruction of the helicopter. The scene then shifts to the Norwegian base camp, as the Americans visit it, hoping to find an answer to the strange behaviour. What they find is a burned-out, wretched mess and one frozen body that is pretty obviously a suicide case. However, there is much worse to be found in the snow outside - they discover what appears to be two horribly deformed bodies partially melded together. Back they go to base, taking the awful conglomerate with them.

Back home, the dog has been getting in the road and it is put into a cage along with the rest of the dogs. This is where the truly incredible effects make their first appearance as the dog's face and body literally split open, revealing the appalling Thing. The creature apparently takes on the form of its victims by ingesting their bodies (while still alive, of course), which it does with real relish. Unfortunately, the main object then seems to be to show, as many times as possible, what happens when the creature is discovered, in whosoever's form it happens to be in. Granted, the result is totally believable, what with faces splitting open and bodies bursting into a butcher's nightmare, but it really is too fucking horrible! Indeed, after the initial display in the huskie's cage, a member of the audience had an epileptic fit and had to be helped from the cinema, and this was before the real effects fireworks.

If you don't publish SF - that is science fiction - don't let that put you off: just let me know and I'll change it to a Western, or perhaps a spy adventure yarn... Just name it, okay?



While I will admit that the film succeeds in being terrifying, in no way can I say that I enjoyed it. It's certainly questionable whether it can be classed as entertainment. I suppose that the disappointing thing (oops) is that the film could have been directed by anyone, as, apart from a few good jokes, it does not feel like a Carpenter film. It seems that as his budgets increase, so his individuality diminishes, which is certainly a shame. His best film remains 'Assault on Precinct 13'.

Anyway, see this if you like astonishing effects and have a strong stomach. Avoid it if you are at all squeamish.

By the way, after this 'Alien' looks about as frightening as 'Mary Poppins' and I don't know why they got Morricone to do the music, as it's done on synthesizers and sounds exactly like typical Carpenter (maybe he's a Carpenter clone).

BLADE RUNNER Dir. Ridley Scott Music: Vangelis 117 mins. REVIEWED BY JIM DARROCH

Here we go again, yet another sf blockbuster. This is the much touted version of Philip Dick's superb novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and I'm bound to say that it is a bit of a disappointment. It has been made as a Philip Marlowe pastich, complete with voice-over, cynical detective and a smog-ridden L.A. of 37 years hence.

The story is reasonably close to the novel but certain essential details have been left out. The empathy test which is used to distinguish androids from humans will baffle anyone who has not read the book; people inexplicably wonder whether animals are real or not, without the viewer ever being told why - the answer is, of course, that since the holocaust animals have virtually been wiped out and their place has been taken by robot pets, real animals being worth vast amounts of money. Possession of a real animal is the ultimate form of oneupmanship; we are also never told why the Earth is in such a nightmarish state as is displayed in the film - the truth is that all healthy people have long since emigrated to the planets.

So, back to the film itself. The story follows the efforts of a bounty hunter as he attempts to hunt down and "retire", i.e., kill, four androids (called "replicants") who have infiltrated Earth society after escaping from a slave colony on a distant mining planet. The "replicants" are totally human in appearance but lack memories of their own and any emotional responses. In order to make the hunt more exciting, the androids in the film have been provided with super-strength, agility, etc, which is quite the opposite of the book's intentions, which was to show the androids as nothing more nor less than just human, nothing else. This is where the conflict is supposed to arise in the mind of the bounty hunter - "Why am I killing these people, what have they done to deserve it?" Unfortunately, this part of the plot is all but ignored, as is the switching of time and identities prevalent in Dick's writing.

The presentation of the city of the future is stunning and represents one of the most believable city-scapes seen in any sf film, with a cesspool of a city with huge neon signs, giant shining steel and glass towers (designed by Syd Mead) and impenetrable smog. A nice detail is that heavy rain continually sweeps across the city, which certainly gives it a "realistic" character. As I indicated, the film has been made as a Philip Marlowe style film noir, i.e., as another 'Alphaville' which is where it falls down. Harrison Ford is embarrassing and his voice overs are woefully lacking in expression or interest. If you thought that Clint Eastwood was a wooden actor, you should see Ford. Unfortunately, by totally failing to give the blade runner any character it becomes impossible for us to care about him at all. In fact, the one really charismatic character in the film is that played by Rutger Hauer, who is the most powerful and dangerous renegade who destroys his creator in a murder of Shakespearian dimensions. One comes to prefer him to the boring old bounty hunter.

As a thriller, this film is ineffectual and this is personified in the exceptionally poor ending, which was reportedly added on at a very late stage. However, the film is definitely worth seeing as it is technically brilliant and has a superbly evocative score by Vangelis.

THE ATOMIC CAFE REVIEWED BY JIM DARROCH

This is an 88 minute documentary created from American atomic propaganda of the 40's and 50's. There is no narration, with films, tv and radio programmes, cartoons and astonishing "bomb songs" (like "Jesus hits like an atom bomb") of the period. It is a salutary lesson to realise that the same kind of stuff is still thrown at us today, like: A film of a nuclear test, with troops stationed one mile from ground-zero who are told (and seen) to watch the blast and then charge in, as the mushroom cloud billows forward of them, so as to surprise any hypothetical enemy troops still there !! In an official film, schoolchildren are taught to always be on the lookout for bright flashes of light - if they see something, they should "cover your eyes and duck". Ludicrous scenes are then shown of whole classrooms of kids diving under their desks. Completely uncomprehending residents of Bikini Atoll are told why they will be very happy to abandon their homes forever.

Other astonishing footage tells you that, after a war your hair may fall out, but not to worry!

This is a real comedy-horror film and if it ever becomes available in Britain on 16mm, get it for a Con.

EVIL DEAD Dir. Sam Raimi 90 mins. REVIEWED BY JIM DARROCH

A group of students settle into a holiday home in the middle of a forest. Meanwhile, the ancient burial grounds of the evil dead wait for the ancient incantation that will arouse them from the depths. Needless to say, they do rise and then.....

This is an amazingly good zombie film a la George Romero, only here there is only a cast of

five. The film is played straight and contains some extremely grisly and chilling scenes, but it is quite obviously not meant to be taken seriously. This is clinched in a scene where the remaining student stalks through puddles of blood in which floats a tin of Band Aid.

A great send-up, which is actually more frightening than many a serious horror film. But it is entertaining.

THE WINGED SERPENT Dir. Larry Cohen 92 mins.

REVIEWED BY JIM DARROCH

A large flying serpent terrorises NYC and feeds on workmen and high-rise apartment dwellers. This monster is linked by cop David Carradine to a series of killings where the victims have been skinned alive. The film eventually climaxes with a duel between the monster and machine-gun-toting cops, which is a pastiche of 'King Kong' (the good one), as bodies fly through the air and the monster is wounded. The film is a splendidly bizarre satire with the actors taking their roles seriously and with none of the parody which would have destroyed the story.

PARASITE (Not in Edinburgh)

REVIEWED BY NIGEL E RICHARDSON

Here we have the generic rebirth of the 1950's B movie; the ingredients are all present; America after the bomb, invaders from within, an ex-rock'n'roll singer (Cherie Curry, once of the Runaways), youth gone bad and a lone scientist on the run from just about everybody. Add to this the fact that it is in 3-D and you have got a seminal "trash" experience. (What this really means is that I couldn't scrape up the five pounds to see Sun Ra at the Venue and there was nothing on tv that night...)

(The problem with 3-D is that you have to wear these cheap and nasty glasses, which is quite a problem if you already wear spectacles; after half an hour I managed to wedge them inside my specs. This wasn't entirely satisfactory as it screwed up the focal length of...but that's my problem, I guess.)

The film starts by ripping off 'Alien'. The scientist is in his laboratory, squinting down microscopes at *E. coli* and the like, listening nervously to the noises from the cellar and knocking test-tubes and petrie dishes over. This first burst of 3-D is quite effective; I moved out of the way along with most of the audience as shattered pyrex flew from the screen.... But down in the cellar the screams get worse - the patient/victim writhes in his bonds (according to convention this should be a woman, but we'll let that pass) and bleurgh! out of his chest bursts this giant leech.

Next we find the scientist driving away from the City; he knows that his work is too dreadful to be used by the Authorities. He has two leeches left to play with. One is in a steel tube; the other is pulsing gently in his stomach. How it got there isn't made clear, but he isn't very happy about it. He wants it out.

He stops at a one-horse town, rents a room off a half-crazy ex-actress and sets up his equipment. Pretty soon he's squinting down those microscopes again and muttering to himself, pausing only to look at the thing throbbing away in his belly and wincing. Soon he attracts the attention of the town hoods who take time out from terrorising the town's uppity nigger to smash up his gear and look for drugs.

"You must have drugs," the leader says, kicking him.

"I haven't. But DON'T OPEN THAT STEEL CONTAINER OVER THERE!"

"Come on, you've got syringes and bunsen burners and litmus paper and all that shit; you must have some drugs."

"I haven't got anything. JUST DON'T OPEN THAT STEEL CONTAINER I'VE HIDDEN OVER THERE!"

"Hot diggity, I wonder what's in that tube..."

They kick the scientist about for a few minutes then take the steel tube ("NOT THE STEEL CONTAINER, FER GAD'S SAKE NO!") to their secret hide-out.

"Ken I open it bass, go on, let me open it, ah gee I never git to open steel containers, bass," says the gang's resident mug. He opens the top, looks in and ...

Meanwhile, a black car with sinister insignia approaches the town. The driver isn't Clint Eastwood but he wishes he was; he's silent, tall, and mean. He wants whatever the scientist has developed - and don't you just know that he's going to get it!

The scientist finds himself being patched up by someone's beautiful daughter, a plucky gal who tells the gang where to stick it. He confides in her. Can love blossom with a giant leech on the loose? Talking of which, the resident mug is moaning and groaning as said leech gnaws and sucks at his vitals.

"Gee bass, this is kinda gross, y'know. I - ah no, not - urgh!"

"I'll thinka something, I've never failed you yet, have I?"

"No bass."

But he does this time, and when everyone wakes up the next day they find that the leech has taken a liking for Cherie's pearly white thighs. It's also developed teeth now at the other end to the one that does the sucking. "Oh Gawd," sez Ms Curry, her acting career vanishing before her bloodshot eyes.

Once more the scientist is squinting at his *E. coli* slides and muttering, "There must be a way to kill that thing." The plucky girl looks on admiringly. "What is it?" she asks. He's about to tell her when the gang burst in. "Sorry we smashed all your equipment and stomped you into the ground and laughed at your socks and drank your oxtail soup but this girl needs help." She certainly does; she's turned the colour of creme de menthe. But it's too late. The moment everyone turns their backs, the parasite takes one last slurp and goes off in search of another victim.

Something else happens, but my glasses fall off. The next thing I know is that the parasite has just burst out of some woman's head which is perhaps the most gruesome thing I've seen since 'O.T.T. or 'The Little and Large Show'. By now the man in the black car has appeared and is asking

(continued on page 16)

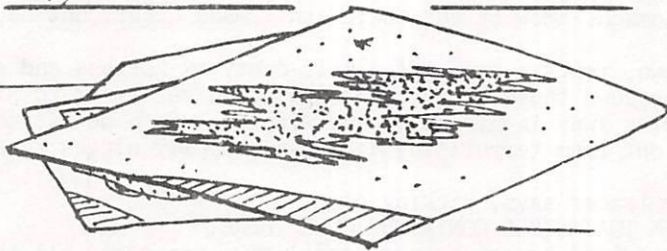
USEFUL HINTS to A R X S X S

one



GOOD EVENING ! SUPPOSE YOU'RE EXPECTING ME TO SAY THAT THIS IS PHILL'S SECOND CARTOON AND YOU'RE TO PAY ATTENTION ! WRONG !! IT'S HIS THIRD. IN ANY CASE PHILL IS OUT ON THE QUEST FOR THE SUPER-PEN. SO WHILE HE'S AWAY I'LL MAKE SOME TEA.

WHEN PHILL DRAWS HE LIKES A CUP OF TEA NEAR BY. IT'S ALL THOSE DOTS HE DOES, TIRES HIM OUT YOU KNOW. ANY WAY THE BEST WAY I'VE FOUND TO MAKE TEA IS TO MAKE IT WITH TEA AND NOT WITH COFFEE. YOU WOULDN'T GET TEA THAT WAY.



WELL, TO MAKE TEA YOU NEED HOT WATER, TEA, MILK, SUGAR AND A SPOON. YOU MIX THEM ALL UP IN A CUP AND LEAVE FOR A WHILE THEN DRINK. AND IT SHOULD TASTE LIKE TEA..... AND NOT LIKE LIQUID PAPER WHICH I SEEM TO HAVE DRUNK....

OH HELL WHERE'S ME CHEST GONE ?

HOPE PHILL IS BACK SOON...

KEV.
THERES NO MILK TODAY
Phill.



DON'T DRINK LIQUID PAPER *Phill*

Having been active in fandom since the mid-Seventies and having got used to its ways, it's sometimes difficult to remember how strange it can all seem to someone encountering it for the first time.... Knowing nothing about fandom most assume that fanzines will be devoted to the furtherance of Science Fiction and consist mainly of book reviews, amateur fiction, and like that. Discovering that this is only true of a small number of fanzines can come as a shock and some react to the news in a strongly adverse fashion. Thus, in each new wave of fans are those who feel the need to raise a hue and cry about fanzines that talk about certain groups of fans and their activities rather than SF. Imagining this to be a recent development, they see it as their duty to take up the banner and crusade against such fanzines in the holy name of Science Fiction. When you've been involved in fan dome for more than a couple of years, such attacks begin to annoy you, not so much for their naivete as for their repetitiveness. And yet, I remember a time.....

My first convention was SEACON, the 1975 Eastercon (held at the De Vere Hotel in Coventry), and I attended it alone because I knew no-one else who shared my enthusiasm for Science Fiction. In one of their progress reports the convention committee had advised first-time con-goers attending alone to share twin-bedded rooms, which proved to be good advice. I no longer recall the name of the guy I shared with, but having one other person to talk to made the whole experience a much more pleasant one than it might otherwise have been (there can be few lonlier places to be than somewhere filled with a lot of people you don't know who are obviously having a great time), and also helped my natural garrulousness to assert itself so that I found myself opening conversations with one or two other people. When you think about it, this should be an easy thing to do at a Science Fiction convention when you know that you definitely have at least one thing in common.

While the sheer wonderment of my first convention alone might have been enough, talking to that handful of people about our mutual interest helped make it the enjoyable, indeed almost overwhelming experience it was. Even so, I was dimly aware that there was an extra dimension to this business, something I know nothing of but which I sensed was important. It seemed unlikely that the large numbers of people, whose accents marked them as having come from all corners of the country, and who plainly knew each other well, could have become so well-acquainted and friendly merely as a result of attending two conventions a year. (EASIERCON and NOVACON were the only conventions in Britain back then - how times change!) in a small room tucked away in some far corner of the hotel, I'd come across a table having for sale something the people behind it referred to as 'fanzines', multi-coloured sheets of paper stapled together into magazines of a sort and bearing curious titles such as EGG, MAYA, CYNIC, CHECKPOINT, and RITBLAT. I flicked through a few of them and bought a copy of something called SFINX. This was a zine published by OUSFiG (Oxford University Science Fiction Group) and contained fairly awful fiction by Oxford students with names like Kevin Smith and David Langford. I'd chosen this particular fanzine to gamble my twenty-five pence on because of its slick litho production since, like most people unfamiliar with fanzines (and even some familiar with them who really should know better) I assumed quality of production meant quality of contents.

One of the people I got talking to at the convention was another first-timer by the name of Paul Kincaid, and after the convention we began corresponding, mainly about the stories we were working on since both of us intended becoming Big Name Science Fiction Authors, and had, in fact, spent a large chunk of one evening at the convention reading each other's short stories. Paul then lived in Manchester and he began attending meetings of the Manchester and District (MaD) Science Fiction Group and receiving fanzines put out by various members. Now, the MaD group had won the bid for the 1976 Eastercon, so when Paul told me that the convention chairman, Peter Presford, published a fanzine called MALFUNCTION, I decided to write and ask for a copy, since anyone who was going to chair an Eastercon must, I reasoned, be a Very Important Fan Indeed. Based on SFINX, I assumed that all fanzines consisted of amateur fiction and book reviews, so I thought I might condescend to give one or two of the tales I'd written, and which had stacked up rather too many professional rejections, to them for publication. I was going to be a Big Name Science Fiction Author, after all. Ah, the arrogance of the ignorant!

When MALFUNCTION finally arrived, I didn't know what to make of it. It wasn't so much Presford's creative spelling and random layout as the subject matter that confused me; I mean, I had expected it to contain serious and constructive material about SF, but MALFUNCTION seemed to concern itself mainly with the activities of people I'd never heard of. What was this magazine? What was it for? I wrote a letter of thanks, Presford printed my address in the next issue, and as a result I received a copy of the ninth issue of Rob Jackson's MAYA.

Two fanzines less alike than MALFUNCTION and MAYA would be difficult to imagine. Whereas MALFUNCTION was duplicated on quarto sheets and side-stapled, its contents fairly messily laid out, MAYA was professionally printed on A3 sheets folded down to A4 and stapled like conventional magazines, and was beautifully laid out in double columns of reduced type with right-justified margins. There was some SF discussion in MAYA, but again, much of it discussed people I didn't know and the things they'd been doing. It also contained heresy. Heresy? Well, yes - how else was I to react to a statement like "as you become more and more involved in fandom SF becomes increasingly irrelevant"? Strong stuff to a raw young fan. After all, don't fanzines exist to further the cause of Science Fiction? Actually, no. What happened, you see, was that gradually SF fans discovered that, while they liked talking about SF, they liked talking about themselves and each other more, and by the mid-40s such zines were in the majority, and still are. Fascinating as SF may be, other people will always be more fascinating, and as the network of fanzines and fan communications grew, so did the possibilities. Why create such a network merely to discuss Science Fiction? What makes it difficult for the newcomers of today is that they bring with them the same ideas and attitudes towards SF as those who started the whole thing in the twenties, but since then fandom has acquired its own words and ways and more than fifty years of tradition. Some people enter fandom with a serious and

constructive (sercon) attitude to Science Fiction which they maintain forever, devoting their energies to the publication of fanzines whose sole *raison d'être* is the discussion of SF. They never progress to the fannish, to the appreciation of how much more interesting other fans and their doings can be than the fiction they all read. This progression was rather succinctly described by Paul Skelton in his letter in MAYA 9:

"...the new fan wants his fanzines to be, in the main, about SF. He either wants to read book reviews, author appreciations or in-depth analyses, author interviews, SF history, and just about any SF trivia he can find. He also wants to read the SF personalzines going on about non-SF items, stabbing each other in the back, feuding or just rapping. Then he's into the lettercolumn, where people are discussing the things he's read, and from then on it's all downhill and he gets sucked right in. Socialising is a cumulative experience. The more you get to know folks, the easier it is to socialise with them and the more pleasurable. Also, it makes it easier to socialise with people you don't know. At the very beginning, though, this is pretty cold water for the neo. He hasn't experienced the pleasures of socialising with other fans, so he has neither the inclination nor the experience. For him SF is the life-preserver. It persuades neos to go in, and keeps them afloat until they no longer need it.

I remember Pat and Mike Meara telling me about their first con. Mike talked to Pat and Pat talked to Mike. 'It's a good thing we both went', said Mike, 'because it's pretty hard to break into all the groups of people'. It's the same in fanzines. You have to relate to people on an SF basis before you can start relating to them on a fannish basis. Some of us get over this stage - and much more quickly, I feel - with local groups and acquaintances. Brian Robinson and I used to have interminable conversations, at least two evenings a week (plus weekends) about SF, so by the time I came into 'organised' fandom I was past the 'Gee, all these people talking about SF - must join in' stage and into the 'Gee, all these people talking about SF - must get to know 'em' stage. For 'socialising' read 'communicating'. I tend to do one or the other, both in the flesh and in the zine medium."

Something else that was rather confusing about MAYA 9 was its cover (reprinted in Brian Ash's VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION), which showed three characters labelled as 'Neo', 'Trufan', and 'BNF'. I understood the distinction between an SF-reader and an SF-fan, the former being a passive consumer and the latter being someone who made the effort to attend conventions and/or participate in fanzines, but what did these designations mean? From the text of the fanzine I gathered that I, as a newcomer, would be regarded as a neo-fan, but how did one progress beyond this stage? Darroll Pardoe supplied the answer in a letter printed the following issue:

"Neohood is a state of mind. You cease to be a neo when everyone accepts you as an adult member of the fan-community. Some people never achieve such a status and remain perpetual neofans."

When I wrote a letter to MAYA (I had by now realised that letters of comment, rather than money, were the price you paid for further copies of a fanzine), I included one or two drawings which Jackson didn't use but passed on to other Gannets for their zines, the Gannets being the Newcastle-based SF fan group he belonged to. As a consequence of all this, I had a good excuse for introducing myself to the Gannets at the Manchester Eastercon, which I did; we got on well together, and they invited me to the first SILICON, being held in Newcastle that August. At SILICON I met a number of interesting people, including Greg Picksergill, through whom I got to know many of the other fans of the day. So it was that, through some activity in fanzines and the usual social graces at conventions, I was 'in' with what I had taken to be cliques at my first convention but were, of course, nothing of the sort.

In the ensuing months I received a lot more fanzines, most of them of the fannish variety. Gradually I began to understand why more fanzines of this sort are published than of the sercon type. Rob Jackson explained their attraction in MAYA 14 when he reviewed some of the fanzines being put out by fans in the London area:

"You'll note that the same names keep cropping up again and again - Charnock, Pickersgill, Langford, Holdstock - because they're all writing about each other and their interactions. Naturally, a small society all writing about each other tend to get preoccupied with themselves, and they refer and cross-refer to each other in ever more complicated ways. The result is like a soap-opera or a cartoon-strip, each with well-established characters whose distinct individualities need to be known to the reader before he/she can fully grasp the niceties involved. Somebody seeing Peanuts for the first time would be puzzled indeed by a joke about Lucy's crabbiness or Snoopy behind German lines; in the same way, you need to know what Graham Charnock said about listening to Dave Langford in his Novacon report before you can properly grasp what Dave's reply in TWLL-DDU was about. It may all be puzzling to the uninitiated outsider, but an informed outsider can understand perfectly if they've been following it.

The net result of all this is an absolutely fascinating cumulative, multi-layered picture, seen from lots of different but very articulate points of view, of all the personalities in current London fandom."

D. West, reviewing fanzines in WRINKLED SHREW 7, clearly agreed:

"Fandom is like a giant, sprawling novel with certain recurrent themes. Characters appear.. disappear.. seem to be developing leading roles then suddenly drop from view.. rise abruptly from obscurity to a brief moment of fame.. Warhol's 'in the future everyone will be famous

for fifteen minutes'..all against a shifting background of plot, counter-plot, interaction of personalities and temperament..abundance of prima donnas..change and development of ideas and character. It's a great spectacle for those who relish convoluted absurdities..the longest running soap-opera on Earth..and has the added attraction that the spectators can get in there and pep up the action is they feel so inclined."

This also explains how it is possible to remain interested in fandom long after you've ceased to care about Science Fiction, but even so it's not possible for fandom as a whole to dispense with SF entirely. This was tried back in the fifties with, as Ted Tubb describes in a letter to MAYA 10, dire results:

"Fandom, it has been claimed, can exist without any reason for being other than that people like to be fans. Logically the contention seems to hold sense but in fact without the cement of a unifying interest any club or assembly will tend to disintegrate. Way, way back in time fans were having such a good time at conventions that it was felt the programme got in the way. So the programme was kicked out and cons turned into parties. When the attendance had fallen so low that you couldn't make a couple of teams from all present it was realised that something had to be done - and the BSFA did it. The point I'm making is that the programme was essential even though it wasn't realised or appreciated. It was there, and without it there was nothing."

This, you see, was why the British Science Fiction Association was formed - in order to provide a gateway into fandom for the newcomer. The BSFA was created in October 1958, but right from the start there were those who had misgivings about it, among them Walt Willis, a prominent fan of the day and writer of some of the best pieces ever to see print in a fanzine, who was less than enthusiastic about the BSFA:

"You know how British fandom has been for years..anarchistic, individualistic, mature. Well, last weekend some fifty of them got together in the George Hotel in Kettering and in cold blood set up a national fan organisation! I tell you, we are in the grip of strange forces. None of us is safe. The news from Kettering was frightening...."

Willis's disquiet at this turn of events was to prove justified because, writing in Tom Perry's QUARK (issue 8, June 1964) about the 1964 Eastercon at Peterborough, he was to report:

"Next morning at the annual general meeting of the BSFA it was clear what we had done. British fandom had been worried by the complete absence of channels of recruitment. Deliberately and in cold blood they had started a sercon organisation, sacrificing valuable fanning time to publish a sercon official organ, full of reviews of science fiction; in this bait was embedded a hook consisting of reviews and reprints from fanzines.

The policy had been spectacularly successful, because the membership of the BSFA was now in the hundreds and scores of them were at Peterborough. The only trouble was that while they seemed to have eaten the bait and grown fat on it, they had ignored the hook.

This situation was starkly illustrated at that BSFA meeting after one of the founder members remarked casually and unguardedly that the purpose of the BSFA was to recruit new members to fandom. A storm of protest made it clear that this was not the purpose of the BSFA at all. Fandom as we knew it was to them a useless excrescence, our fanzines incomprehensible and irrelevant. They were fandom."

The BSFA has never had any great significance for me, probably because when I came into fandom it had ceased to exist. It had collapsed totally and fanzines of the day even carried obituaries for the organisation. However, for some reason there were fans of the time who felt that it was in some way their duty to resurrect the BSFA and so it rose again, and in the period that followed it once again turned Frankenstein monster-like on its creators and their descendants, until Alan Dorey and other fannish fans siezed control of it. At the time of its resurrection, convention attendances were rising at such a rate that its original purpose had been rendered largely redundant and the logic behind its resurrection incomprehensible. Be that as it may, however, the BSFA is with us now and presumably it does still bring in one or two people to fandom, though if they take the BSFA magazine as their role models, their fanzines will inevitably be sercon. Not that there's anything wrong with putting out a sercon zine - there will always be room for good sercon zines in fandom - but, unless the raw young fans of the moment are exposed to fanzines other than those of the type produced by the BSFA, they may not realise the possibility of any other sort exists.

In talking about good sercon zines above, I'm specifically excluding amateur fiction, since amateur fiction zines are, quite frankly, worthless. In the last seven years I've got to see a large number of these zines and none of them have had any redeeming qualities. In days such as these, when the quality of fiction published in the professional SF magazines is so low (and you don't have time to read all the things you'd like to anyway), you can guarantee that the quality of that in the amateur fiction zines will be far worse. A short while ago, in an American fanzine called RUNE, a fan with the unlikely name of Luke McGuff stated that,

"There is an unspoken law among all the 'quality' fanzines of my acquaintance: Don't publish fiction. Don't ever publish fiction. I've seen the same 'unwritten law' discussed in other editorials, and it bothered me then."

McGuff felt that editors of such zines were "...too chicken to give a future potential Robert Silverberg or Harlan Ellison (or any other writer who first wrote for fanzines) the chance to be bad and get published." Ted White, a fan for more than thirty years and ex-editor of AMAZING, FANTASTIC,

HEAVY METAL, etc. - and thus someone who should know what he's talking about, if anyone does, answered McGuff at some length in the piece quoted below:



"The 'unwritten law' (which is still broken fairly frequently) evolved from observation. Observers noted that (a) amateur fiction published in fanzines tended to earn undue praise from the readers of those fanzines, giving the authors of those stories an inflated notion of their abilities and talent, which made rejection from professional markets an ego-shock and produced in some would-be's the paranoid notion that they were too good for the professional markets and were being rejected by jealous editors; (b) amateur SF, if it was worth reading, would sell to professional markets, which left the stories in fanzines de facto not worth reading, an observation borne out conclusively by research; and (c) very few successful professional SF writers were known for their fiction when they were fans, nearly all of them, Silverberg and Ellison among them, having written chiefly non-fiction for fanzines.

In his interview (by Ginjer Buchanan) in MAINSTREAM 6, Terry Carr illustrates these points: 'Before I ever saw a fanzine, when I just heard of fanzines, I thought, God, that's a fantastic idea...you don't have to be Isaac Asimov or Murray Leinster to get your stuff published; somebody will actually put it into print and it'll be preserved for centuries and people generations from now will read what you wrote. And being twelve, I didn't realise what a horrible idea that was...I'd begun writing science fiction stories almost as soon as I started reading Science Fiction, and sending them off to professional magazines. They always came back...So I took a bunch of those stories and sent them to fanzine editors, and a lot of them got published. I will not tell you where. Someone would look them up.' One of those fanzines was BREVIZINE, a fanzine to which I contributed both cartoons and stories. BREVIZINE called Terry 'The next Ray Bradbury!' '...but then, they called most of their contributors that. BREVIZINE had terrible standards, although we didn't realise it then.

But Terry continued, later in his interview: 'Anyway, later on I got into writing things like convention reports, personal essays, personal experiences, things like that. A kind of fannish style that taught me a lot about narrative art: although I wasn't doing it to learn that, that's what it taught me, because essentially I was writing funny little stories, and in order to do that well you have to learn the basic things about narrative, such as condensation, planting the things that the reader has to know in order to understand the punchline...many of the things that go into successful short stories or novels.'

Exactly. It's hardly a coincidence that so many of the fannish fans of our era (6th fandom) became professional authors, while very few of the sercon types who published their stories year after year in fanzines like YANDRO ever made it.

I speak as one who published his share of really rotten little stories in fanzines like BREVIZINE while I was in my mid-teens. Now, after 22 years and 17 books-worth of a career as a professional writer I can quite honestly say that I learned nothing worth knowing from that early experience. My worst adolescent efforts are enshrined in print as a permanent embarrassment and in no way forecast the talent I was later discovered to possess. 'The chance to be bad and get published' is no real help at all if you want to learn to be good. Future Ellisons and Silverbergs would do well to emulate Groucho Marx and shun all fanzines whose standards are low enough to accept their fiction."

At the moment, the level of activity in British fandom is too low for the development of that "...interaction of personalities and temperament..." mentioned earlier that is fannish fanzines at their most stimulating and rewarding. Eventually, inevitably, its time will come again, but for now, if you are thinking of publishing a fanzine, just bear in mind that there are more possibilities inherent in fanzines than are realised by making them a pale imitation of the professional magazines As D. West so rightly said:

"A fanzine exists as a thing in itself - as an original. It is not a copy of something else."

Amen.

(continued from page 11)

questions and killing people, not necessarily in that order. He's about to zap the uppity nigger when the gang leader intervenes: he zaps the gangleader instead.

"You saved my life," sez the uppity nigger.

"Huh, yeah, well," the splattered gang leader murmurs. "You owe me one." And he dies, re-deemed.

Meanwhile, the scientist has hit himself on the forehead. "Of course!" he says. "Why didn't I think of that before!" and so on. Ultrasonic sound will kill the varmint, he has realised. So he sets up a handy sine-wave generator, an oscilloscope and a hundred watt Marshall Amp and sets about giving the thing in his belly a burst of Mantovani. Soon the thing is leaping about beneath his skin and he's gritting his teeth and saying "higher, higher" to the plucky girl. She grits her teeth and turns up the sound. The thing bursts from his chest, falls on the floor and dies. The scientist makes with the elastoplast. "It's over," sez the plucky girl.

"No it isn't," says the man in the black car. He and the scientist wrestle on the floor and ... oh ho, who's this sliding under the door? Old slimy is back! Who's going to get his? The man in black, naturally. He screams, falls through a wall and eventually catches fire, taking the leech with him.

"Now is it over?" asks the plucky girl.

"It's over," the scientist says, holding the plucky girl close. But he doesn't say "You know, honey, there are some things that mankind shouldn't meddle with..." which rather spoils things. The End. I take off the stereoscopic glasses and stumble out into the Oxford Road. The rest is silence.

A marketing expert will tell you that the key to success is to find a gap in the market and produce a commodity to fill it. We're not marketing experts and don't want to hype a product, but do feel there's a very large gap in the market that needs to be filled.

What market?

Fanzines. A cursory glance through *Matrix* shows a plethora of fanzines - enough, you'd think, to satisfy any taste or need - but there's one missing: a zine aimed, at least in part, at those new fans who don't know what it's all about; who are bewildered by the range of fanzines available; who are not yet ready either to contribute to an established zine or produce one themselves; who want to become involved but feel daunted or don't know how; who don't know what a fanzine is but could well be interested if they could find out. That's the gaping hole we're aiming to plug.

Who's we?

A motley band of fans, some of whom have been involved in some aspect of the fanzine scene for several years, others still in the process of making those first tentative steps. The team consists of Judith Hanna, Eve Harvey, Roy Macinski, Janice Maule and Pam Wells.

What's the product?

Shallow End, a new genzine (general interest magazine) which will not only stand as a zine in its own right, but also provide practical help and encouragement to anyone wanting to become involved in fanzine activity. This help will cover as wide a range of interests as possible: technical advice on production, mailing lists, layout, editing etc; artwork; writing skills; what's been done before..... you ask us, we'll attempt to help you. We want you to use us as a sounding board, we'll give advice or print articles that will illustrate points by example. Hopefully the zine will develop into a kind of "written workshop" with constructive criticism either in print, or if you prefer, privately (depending on the quantity, of course). What will not be included is fiction. *Focus* and other specialist fanzines provide an outlet for fan fiction already, and we don't want to duplicate work already being done.

Since the emphasis in fanzine activity is on participation, that's where our emphasis will lie. Passive consumers will not be catered for - no subscriptions will be taken. If you want to receive a copy of the zine you'll have to do something for it. That something can be a contribution in the form of article, artwork, etc, letter of comment or suggestion for future issues, or simply a request for the next copy enclosing 30p in stamps.

As this is an innovative venture, a sample copy (Issue 0) will be produced to introduce ourselves and show what we intend to do. We want to reach those people who don't already have strong fanzine links, which makes compilation of a mailing list more difficult than usual, so a copy of Issue 0 will be sent to a random sample of the BSFA membership (possible 1 on 10). This pilot should be out by November and Issue 1 will follow two months later, with subsequent issues on a two-monthly schedule thereafter. If you think you'd be interested and want to ensure you receive a copy, simply write to Janice Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Road, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3HY, enclosing 30p in stamps. But remember, if we don't hear from you, you won't receive the next issue - that will be going out to yet more new people.

We want to help people participate but the success of the project depends on your response, so how about taking the plunge, even if it is only in the *Shallow End*?

CONVENTION REPORTS

EUROCON 1982/FESTIVAL DER FANTASTIK, MÖNCHENGLADBACH, 20-22 AUGUST 1982

A REPORT BY MARJORIE BRUNNER

The brochures say that Mönchengladbach is a very pleasant city with fine parks

some beautiful architecture, a splendid town hall, and a castle. Who, though, manages to see a town during a con? I did! once find out how much more attractive Glasgow is than most reports would have it, even though the con took place in one hotel, as usual in Britain, but that was because I had to walk the dogs. At Mönchengladbach we were dogless, and the visiting guests were housed in two hotels, of which ours was some 15 minutes' drive from the High School where the action was, so what we saw of the place over the weekend was during our daily race from hotel to school to pub and back. The pubs turned out to be run mostly by Greeks, which wasn't very helpful to us trying to practise a bit of German, but never mind...

Moreover the Eurocon committee had three time-consuming meetings, which prevented us from taking a proper part in the con events. But they looked pretty good from what we managed to see: book and magazine displays (notably by *Deutsches SF Magazin* and *Cosmonaut*), an art exhibition which overflowed on to a second floor of the school, the inevitable auction, and posters everywhere – the one in most demand being a large one designed for Heyne by Karel Thole, who was conspicuous by his welcome presence. Our personal pleasure was in meeting the committee (a very enterprising bunch), and re-meeting friends from France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia, Switzerland (hmm...!), Austria ... plus the bonus of time spent with Cherry Wilder, a most scintillating, entertaining and charming person.

The membership list topped 1000. Maybe not all of them were there all the time, but a lot of people showed up for talks on SF in Czechoslovakia (Josef Nesvadba), Poland (Tadeusz Markowski), Russia (Alim Keshokov), France (Jean-Paul Cronimus), Latin America (Bernard Goorden), which in between the film shows gave rise to plenty of questions and discussion. During these talks Waldemar Kunning was recording every precious word. (He had a busy weekend, as he also helped out from time to time as an excellent interpreter.) One highlight was a brilliant performance by a very tall, very thin clown called Tommi Linz, in song, dance, poetry and mime. I consider myself lucky to have caught this while John was stuck in a Eurocon meeting...

There was one publishers' party: the pro's, foreign guests and their friends were invited to a reception by Bastei Lübbe, who publish a fine paperback SF list. They only gave us mineral water and orange juice to drink (except beer, which I don't like much even when it's German), but the food was superb, laid out like a country-style buffet.

Altogether it was a very "dry" con, but this didn't prevent a great deal of enthusiastic discussion. West Germany is busy discovering that SF is worth paying attention to, as was evidenced by the presence of a TV team recording not only the con but also interviews with people like editor Wolfgang Jeschke from Heyne Books, Horst Pukallus the translator, Dr. Dieter Hasselblad the writer and broadcaster... and John!

Who made the usual GoH speech, in this case a résumé of his life in the SF field, which Waldemar promptly snapped up for his excellent fanzine *Munich Roundup*. To my amazement, even though it was essentially non-controversial, it was followed not by questions about SF but by a political discussion! German fandom turns out to be very concerned about matters of war and peace, and all John's comments about a nuclear-free Europe were greeted with wild clapping from a crowded hall. (One of the questions, by the way, was: "As a science fiction writer, could you have foreseen the war over the Falkland Islands?")

Turning to Eurocon: there was unanimous approval for Britain in 1984. If our Eastercon bid is (heaven forbid) defeated, Ghent was accepted as an alternative. It looks as though most future Eurocons will be combined with the relevant national SF con, the most practical approach. Matjas Sinkovec from Yugoslavia promoted the idea of a Eurocon in Zagreb in 1986. This too was generally agreed as a good venue. Let me personally add that, because they bring together so many nationalities, Eurocons are great fun, especially – dare I say it? – as so many people speak English. Fans from all over look forward to their visit to Brighton!

Finally, as usual, the Eurocon Committee made awards for outstanding work in the SF field. The ex-Secretary General for Eastern Europe, Czeslaw Chruszczewski, was posthumously voted a Member of Honour. Prizes for major contributions to SF were as follows:

Publishers: Heyne (West Germany): KAW (Poland)
Magazine: Antares (France)
Fanzine: Shards of Babel (Belgium)
Authors: Arkady & Boris Strugatskii (USSR); John Brunner (UK)*

All in all it was a pretty good weekend.

(*This was sprung on John by other members of the jury who held a separate meeting without him, and while pleased he was also rather embarrassed. But the first time he heard about it was just prior to the award ceremony, and by then the announcement had already been circulated. - MRB)

UNICON 3

BY SIMON OUNSLEY

UNICON 3, if not a revolution in miniature, was at least a welcome contrast to the stories coming over from America, where fanzine fans find themselves engulfed in the throngs of media fanatics, dodging broadswords and zap-guns as they search in vain for some sign of intelligent life. UNICON 3 was a silicon chip of fandom: a convention with a membership of about 200, where fans and fanatics could co-exist peacefully, getting drunk or getting eaten by giant toads, according to their wont. It was small enough to allow you to find the people you know, but large enough to encompass such dissimilar events as a Dungeons & Dragons figure painting competition and a fan guest of honour speech by Groucho Marx lookalike and baked-bean victim, Leroy Kettle.

It was a convention of contrasts: a very laid-back affair in which the relatively vast distances between sleeping accommodation and events produced not exhaustion (as I'd feared at first, while our committee guide led us sherpa-like through the strange architecture and woody glades of the campus), but a calming effect. A breath of fresh air helps to clear the head wonderfully - at future conventions I shall make a point of walking several times round the hotel, or at least hanging my head out of the window, at intervals during the weekend - and the isolation of the halls of residence allowed anyone who was overcome by a surfeit of John Smith's awful bitter to get away from it all for an hour or two if they wished.

Laid-back, it was. But I couldn't get it out of my head that the Keele University campus was a very nice place to spend a weekend but must be an awful place to spend a couple of years. An artificial community, cut off from the surrounding towns, it must seem awfully bleak and claustrophobic at times. "Since there's so few students" our sherpa told us, "they force people to live on campus". Be warned when you fill in your UCCA forms. A strange place, the campus: there are guildings so completely covered in some sort of climbing plant that they look like bushes with a few bricks grafted on. And Phil Palmer told me that Owen Whiteoak saw a punk tree. "Did it have a safety pin through the trunk?" I asked. "No, it had a yellow stripe down the bark", said Phil, which is punk enough for a tree I suppose. Pleasant woodland surroundings: they're nice enough during the day but they get dark at night and you get to wondering what the shadows might harbour. I've got this feeling that somewhere out there there's probably a tree with a pink stripe, and maybe a couple of Heavy Metal bushes.

"The convention's OK" said Chris Atkinson, "but I used to go to Keele you see." The second part of her sentence had such overtones of doom that my next question hardly seemed necessary: "How was it?"

"It was awful" said Chris, "I hated every minute of it, apart from the oat-cakes."

Later she gave me an oat-cake. It looked like a pancake but tasted like wall-paper paste disguised as a face-flannel (for instance).

"Those are the best thing about Keele," she said, tellingly.

But the convention was good. Rob Holdstock gave a wonderful speech about a week he spent in Wales writing a hack novel and on a holiday with his wife at the same time and Kettle followed it up with a typically lunatic, "This is Your Life", a fannish first in that it was both funny and brief: "This is the cat you left to starve this weekend, Robert Holdstock" cries Leroy, while Andrew Stephenson enters, weilding a limp cuddly toy. And there were room parties powered by Phil Palmer's

astonishingly large portable cassette player and entertained by Phil's equally astonishing gay comic book. People danced and cavorted and sat around and Simon Polley horrified everyone by appearing with a bottle full of some strange orange liquid. (He had added orange juice to a half bottle of D. West's rum.) There's another contrast: at home in Leeds, Polley sits around quietly losing money at dominoes; at Keele, he was transformed into a continuously shrieking holligan. So bad was his behaviour, I decided on the last night to preserve the good name of the Leeds Group by putting it about that Simon really came from Cardiff; he helped me out by speaking in a loud Welsh accent for the rest of the evening.

There were one or two off moments of course, like the committee's determination to prevent those who had paid for the Sunday night buffet from eating very much of it. "Wait till I call seconds," the Oliver Twists among us were told when we tried to fill our plates again (actually, I was too scared to try, but Elaine sneaked away with some cheese and biscuits). The "seconds" call never came, though we found we were entitled to pudding if we produced a soiled plate as proof of identity.

Having successfully discouraged everyone from eating the food, the committee then found they had half of it left, so they invited everyone who hadn't paid to eat it up for them: "Here have a plate. You might as well eat it. It'll only go to waste." Bloody hell, I'm a bit of a socialist myself, but I think such egalitarian politics should be kept out of fandom.

While I'm grouching, I'll just mention that the Saturday night disco was doomed from the moment it was decided to screen a video of a certain recently newsworthy movie at the same time. (I enjoyed it though.) And I'll also mention that committees spend months of their valuable time organising conventions which the vast majority of their members enjoy and the only thanks they get is when some pillock starts nit-picking in a fanzine.

Other things happened, as you might imagine: Elaine spent £5 on a picture by Pete Lyon of copulating angels ("That's disgusting" said West, "you can't even be sure that one of them's a female"), a round-robin letter to FORTH ended up featuring Arnold Tharg and Gonad the Barbarian (remember them?); Simon Polley fell asleep eating a can of tuna fish and woke up to find himself and most of the room covered in the stuff ("Disgusting behaviour" said horrified room-mate D. West, "he tidied up by kicking the can under the bed"); other things happened - you know the sort of thing.

Why do I go to conventions? I wake up with awful John Smith's hangovers; my brain stops putting words in the right order; I talk about fanzines too much. That's it, you see. I'm a puritan. I'm in fandom because of fanzines, not because of conventions. This has only been a taster of a UNICON 3 conrep. The real thing is to come from D. West, who isn't a puritan. "I'm going to write a long article about UNICON 3" he told me, "it was so depraved!"

So there you are. UNICON 3 was depraved. Either I missed the depraved bits or I enjoyed them so much my puritan conscience has expunged them from my memory. You'll have to wait for D's version for the real truth.

As I drove away from UNICON, I drove over the grass verge of a roundabout. The next roundabout we saw had sloping paving around the edge. "Look" said Simon Polley, getting excited, "that one's got a ramp!"

But I dragged my brain back to sanity by that time. I'm always doing that. I come away from conventions and run out of petrol or walk into walls. It's so difficult to get your mind acting responsibly again. There's always a vacuum there. It's sad. You come away from a convention and you feel that something has gone out of your mind, out of your life. And you can't for the life of you work out quite what it was.

THE COMPETITION FROM LAST ISSUE HAS BEEN HELD OVER, SO GET ON YOUR THINKING CAPS AND START WRITING A REVIEW OF A MAINSTREAM WORK SHOWING WHY IT IS SUCH A MARVELLOUS (OR LOUSY) PIECE OF SCIENCE FICTION. FUN!

DOWN PALACE WALLS BY MARTYN TAYLOR

In my first column I deliberately wrote about what I felt to be particularly praiseworthy, leaving the other zines for a mention only. I regard it as my duty as *Matrix* fanzine reviewer to let you know which zines are available, to the best of my knowledge. As you can see from the list I have some 43 zines to look at this time, and unless Graham is prepared to turn over the whole of *Matrix* to me, which he isn't (thank God!), there is simply no way that I can review every one of these zines, varied as they are. I am not prepared here to dismiss anyone's work with a few ill-chosen words (I do that in my own zine, don't I, Lisa), because that wouldn't be fair. So, to anyone out there in the throes of egoboo deprivation, sorry team, but it's a harsh, cruel world.

Today's text is taken from the gospel according to Ted White, as found on page 8 of Avedon Carol's *Blatant 11*. 'Most fans are not outstandingly talented . . . they put out . . . a decent fanzine which commands the loyalty of its contributors and readers, but not a great fanzine.' He proceeds to compare an 'average' American zine - *Raffles* - with an 'average' British zine - *Epsilon* (would that it were true! *Epsilon* is one of the better British zines). Now, Ted doesn't really compare them at all, merely lists the contents of each zine - not that Ted is going to take any notice of what I say, no way, no how; Ted ploughs his own furrow, bless his little shaven head - but that is not my objection. What gets me is this notion of an average fanzine.

I shall say right now, that I do not accept that there is an average zine, typical maybe, but not average (and before anyone attacks me for nitpicking, words have meanings, and fairly precise meanings even in our flexible English language). 'Average' is a mathematical concept, concerned with items discernibly identical within limits. Human beings, though, are discrete variables, and averages do not apply. Combining averages with human beings can lead to odd situations. For instance, have you ever seen 0.3 of a kid? The average family has one. Anyway, anyone who says 'average' when they mean 'typical' ought not to be attempting anything so strenuous as expressing themselves in English. Even typicalities are tricky things when applied to something so personal, so determinedly idiosyncratic as a fanzine.

What has been brought home to me very forcibly by preparing for this column is how individual all these fanzines are. Of course, there are similarities, largely because of the productional paradigms we set ourselves when we choose our format, and as a generality it could be said that British zines tend to be lower key than American ones, that on this side of the Atlantic we seem more concerned with publishing our issue than with producing the perfect fanzine. Which is almost certainly a product of the different emphases of British and American fandoms. Within those differences, however, the individual zines are as different as can be. Which is just as it should be, if fanzines are to reflect the personalities of their editors.

Unfortunately it can make life a little difficult for fanzine reviewers, or overviews, such as myself. On their own terms almost all of these zines are interesting - and those that are not all seem to suffer from too great a self absorption on the part of the editors, cf. *Axed A Neoteric Line*, *Sodd's Lore* - and it is a little difficult to choose a zine from the pile which stands out in terms of quality. I have found one, and it is typical of all the others in being totally untypical of all the others. Dave Langford's *Cloud Chamber 13* is a personal essay on the subject of changing house (a matter of some moment to myself just at the moment), and as an example of such an essay this ought to be required reading for all of us who would attempt it. The topic is one that most of us will experience sometime during our lives, and one about which has accreted a mythos all of its own. In six pages Dave tells us why he had to move, the practicalities involved and his reactions to the whole shebang. What separates *Cloud Chamber* from the many other similar descriptions that we have read before, and will read in the future, is Dave's point of view, his polished style, and the way in which he finds humour in a serious situation without diminishing the impact of that seriousness. This is real skill, team. This is a gem, each facet carefully chosen and equally carefully polished. The work that has gone into this piece is not obvious on first reading, it is an effortless read, but when you think about it you can see those pools of mental sweat standing on the workroom floor, proof of what I wrote in the last column, that 'it is possible to be funny and good, it just ain't easy.'

This review must inevitably be overshadowed by the tragic news of Le Morte de Pong. Pong, the creature of Dan Steffan and Ted White, although most of the time it felt like Ted was upfront with Dan lurking in the background bearing his folio and an enigmatic smile, was one of the few zines which lived up to its distribution claims, mostly. It was horribly regular, but those doses of drool and invective from Ted, the stegosaurus of fandom, always managed to raise a frisson of interest in a drab and dreary week. R.I.P. Pong.

Ansible 27/28: Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU. £1 for 5, or 4 airmailed abroad - \$US equivalent to Burns, 48 Lou Ave, Kings Park, NY, NY 11754, USA. Indispensalbe genzine packed with poll gossip, TAFF and GUFF stuff, generally actionable bits, and the Ansible Poll results (in 27). You get it already.

Axed 18: Lobi Press, 15D Wentworth Court, Dundee DD2 3SR. 25 pence. 12 A5 photocopied pages of hysterical moans at the good folk of Dundee for their failure to realise that the millenium is upon them in the disguise of the musically oriented 'Axed' team. To quote, 'It's no good moaning from 9 to 5 if you haven't got the guts to leave.' But Lee Jackson was before their time.

Blatant 11: Avedon Carol, 4409 Woodfield Road, Kensington, Maryland 20895 USA. 'the Usual or \$US2, or if I feel like it.' Very nicely produced zine by left-wing feminist Avedon (not that you would

notice) with a guest editorial from Alexis Gilliland, Ted White's review column, illos from Bruce Townley, Alexis Gilliland, ATom, Rob Hansen, and not enough from Avedon herself. Recommended.

Boonfark 6: Dan Steffan, 1010 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, Virginia, 22046, USA. 'the usual, *Old Fanzines*', Artwork or the revolting amount of \$US2.50.' A big zine (46 pages of thick paper) from Dan in the manner we expect - i.e., one of THE ways fanzines ought to be done with clear print and good illos. Worth acquiring for Steve Brown's description of his time and troubles when he ran away to join the circus, and the second chapter of the Illustrated Enchanted Duplicator. Rich Coad's fanzine commentary is insightful closed to us Brits while Ted White mooches around 7th Fandom, as though anyone was interested. Also recommended.

Cloud Chamber 13: Dave Langford (same address as *Ansible*). This used to be Dave's contribution to Simon Bostock's now folded apa, so availability is questionable, which is a bloody shame because this is the best piece of fanwriting this year. Dave describes moving house as only Dave can. Bully the man, but don't tell him I sent you.

Death Rays 4: South Hants Group c/o John Bark, 5 Byerley Close, Westbourne, Ensworth, Hants PO10 8TS. Free to members, the usual to everyone else. A zine of mostly short pieces and lots of illos (but I won't mention copyright...) Mike Cheater looks at comics, Nik Morton discusses the future of sf (it has one?), Jeff Suter tells us his favourite reading, John Bark looks at horticultural stories, plus reviews and letters. Acceptably executed, but the earth didn't move and nothing is explored at the necessary length.

Ellipsis 1(?): Kev Smith at present of no fixed abode, but try The Green, Bromyard, Hereford, HR7 4RZ. 'the usual, and editorial whim.' Kev writes in his customary urbane manner about bookshops, about returning to Oxford and Arthur D. Hlavaty, plus letters. Good, forgettable stuff. I just wish Kev would get his arse in gear and write something that is not ephemeral. Even his piece on revisiting Oxford, about which he plainly has strong feelings, only hinted rather than delivered. C'mon Kev, let yourself go for once.

Empty Hands 1: Durham University Science Fiction Society, Society Pigeon Holes, Students Union, Durham University, Durham. Available for the usual. Society zine, with short contributions from lots of members, with the remarks above about *Death Rays* applying, except for 'The Chronicle of Bijk' by Nick Smith, which is rather moderate, somewhat derivative fiction. The typeface is reduced, but always legible and John Zealey may develop into an interesting artist.

Genesis 1: Ed Hillyer, 13 Freshfield Drive, Trent Gardens, Southgate, London N14 4QW. 60p per issue. A pictorial zine with odd pieces of prose. I don't feel qualified to comment, not being a comics etc fan, and the only criticism I'd make is that it isn't easy to see who did what. Nevertheless this one is well worth acquiring, and I'd call it good value for money.

Koinos Kosmos 2: Klaus Johansen, Godthabsgade 61/st.tv., DK-5000 Odense C, Denmark. Available for trade or money (\$US1 per issue, add 50% for overseas air mail). A cosmopolitan fanzine devoted to the works of Phillip K Dick. Klaus is not afraid to print pieces critical of his hero, but on the whole this is sercon, but interesting. Ole E Petterson is another artist who can do interesting work.

Microwave 2: Terry Hill, 41 Western Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8NE. Available for 20p in stamps, or exotic bribery. More low-key chat from the determinedly backward-looking Terry, plus the results to the music quiz in *Microwave 1*, and his new quiz which is bloody ridiculous. Viné Clarke provides an old fashioned fan's guide to gardening, which is basically an instruction to put down that garden fork and go and do something interesting, like reading Doc Smith. Not my cup of tea, as Terry knows, but it takes all sorts and the more the merrier.

Munich Round Up 153: Waldemar Kunning, Herzogspitalstr. 5, D-8000 Munchen 2, Postschekkonto Munchen 1478 14-802. DM 3 for 1, DM 11 for 4, DM 21 for 8 (\$US1.40, \$5.30, \$10 - US agent Andrew Porter, PO Box 4175, New York, NY 10163, USA). Huge (72 pages!) German language zine with English language digest. I didn't understand a word, even of the speech by Bob Shaw, but I recognised the Jim Barker cartoons. Acres and acres of print that look interesting. I'll just have to learn German.

A Neoteric Zine, or A Grope in the Dark 1: Matthew Mackulin, 28 Croft Close, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancs BB4 8NG. Available for LoC, Contribution and LoC, or 20p. A brave attempt by young Matthew to reinvent the wheel. You don't need to apologise for being a neo, Matt, but you could do with a bit more content. The piece on being a neo is good as far as it goes, but I feel that you haven't taken Dave Langford's advice. Come on, team, get on to Matt, get a copy and then LoC him. He is 'da future', after all.

The Orgone Accumulator 1: Dave Hicks, 26 Mead Road, Edgeware, Middlesex, HA8 6LJ. Available for trade, LoC, contribution. A personalzine with Dave telling us what it's like to work for a blood bank, a sortofaconrep for Channelcon, a panegyric for Rush (like I said, it takes all sorts), a story of out of sorts, and the lettercol for *Old Scrodds Almanac*. Dave has evidently bought out Phil Palmer's stock of puke yellow paper, but nevertheless this is an interesting zine, and gets two stars.

Overmatter 7: Steve Green, Gutter Press, 11 Fox Green Crescent, Birmingham, B27 7SD. For the Solihull Science Fiction Group. Available for return postage (basic rate) or trade. A farewell issue overshadowed by Bob Shaw's reminiscences on being a theatrical child star. It's Bob Shaw. It's good, 'snuff said, so go get it.

Pong 36 to 40: Ted White, 1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, Virginia, 22046, USA; Dan Steffan, address as *Boonfark*. Available for LoC, trade (copies to both eds. please) or vast numbers of 20¢ stamps. No. 38 is 4 pages of Dan's cartoons, but that apart it's the mixture as before with conreps from Wally the Snake, assorted bits by odd people about whatever takes their mind at the time. Because of its regularity, it is a clean, topical zine which always gets some reaction. No. 40 is the end of the line, sniff, 'cos Ted and Dan have decided that 40 of a zine appearing every three weeks is enough (pity they wouldn't tell Ike the news). The end of an era which leaves the question unanswered, who does write Rob Hansen's LoCs?

Possible: Anonymous (and rightly so) and barefaced rip-off of the classic *Ansible* style, full of scurrility and bad jokes. Anyone who wants to see the aftermath of a BoSFA mailing session should ask Cave Fanglord for a copy, but I don't recommend it one bit.

Quartz 3: Geoff Kemp, Diamond Press, 23 Raygill, Wilnecote, Tamworth, Staffs, B77 4JY. 80p per copy, or £2.50 for 4. Also available for trade and 'the usual'. A zine given over mostly to fiction and poetry, with stories by Paul Brantingham, Anthony Blagg, Phil Watson and Steve Green, plus poems by Pete Trowther, Steve Sneyd, Steve Green, Chuck Connor, Thomas C Davis, Julie Markham, Ken Mann. Also reviews, and overview and interview with Philip E. High, and a brief look at Rob Holdstock. Most of the work has interest but, to my mind, hasn't gone through the typewriter enough times (to paraphrase John Brunner). Why don't you get it and find out for yourself? Any writer needs contact with a critical audience if they are to improve, and the newer writer needs it most of all. Worthy.

RAA 4: Martyn Taylor, address as end of column. Available for 'the usual'. Eve Harvey discusses being a woman today; John D Owen gives a guided tour of downtown Milton Keynes; Robert Allen muses about the future of sf magazines; I review a few books and films, mourn Philip K. Dick, but not London.

Not Science Fantasy News June 1982: Vinç Clarke, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, DA16 2BN. Available for 'the usual'. Vinç labours under the impression that nothing has changed in the world since he gafiated. At least that is the impression from his 'Letter to Jophan', although I have to admit that I disagree so utterly with his stance of total acceptance of the 'golden age' notion that I have some difficulty in being rational about it. If something is bad, I'm not about to say it is good because it is called 'sf'. Mind you, I have no objection to Vinç or anyone saying just that. I wonder, though, whether they could extend the same privilege to me, given some power. Hmm.

Shards of Babel 2: Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 589, 8200 AN Lelystad, the Netherlands. F5 (\$US2) for 4 in Europe, N. America; for 3 elsewhere. £1 for 4. Roelof's English language European information zine with oodles of news items about sf things happening in Europe. I'd definitely suggest that you get this.

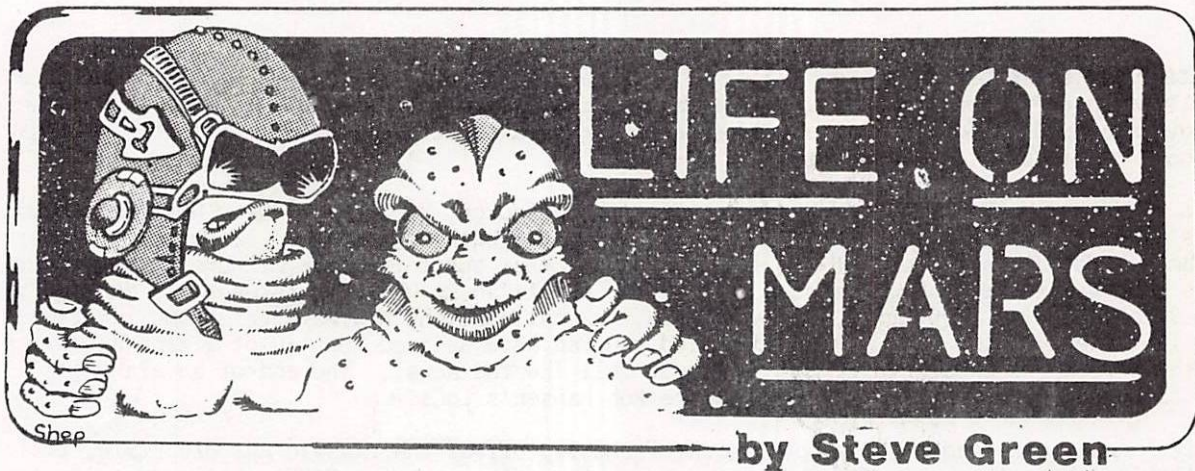
SODD's Lore 2: 18 Selkirk Road, Tooting, London. Available for fanzines, letters, articles, comments and reviews. These guys seem to see themselves as iconoclasts riding tall in the saddle. Oh well. Of interest is Andy Crook's assault upon the D&D company, but most of the rest has been said much better elsewhere. Much as is the case with the perpetrators of 'Axed', methinks these lads have a somewhat too high opinion of themselves.

Space & Time 61/62: Gordon Linzner, 138 West 70th Street, Apt. 4-B, New York, NY 10023 USA. \$US4 for 1, \$US7 for 2, \$US13 for 3. A massive fictionzine that seems to be filled with the derivative junk churned out by talentless graduates of 'creative writing courses', and graduates who seem to think they are H.P. Lovecraft. On the other hand, the production is faultless, attractive and some of the illos are as good as you'll see. There are a few good stories, and one that is quite as loathsome as any I've ever read. Is it all worth it? I was asking that myself.

Thule 1/2: Johannes H. Berg, PO Box 121, Vinderen, Oslo 3, Norway. Available for trade, contribution or NOK 3 per issue. An English language Norwegian zine, described by Johannes as 'occasional'. No 2 is a distinct improvement on 1 with a conrep on Norcon 4, the Oslo Students SF club, Norwegian SF publishing, general snippets (reinforcing the 'Ansible' feel - ah well, imitate the best) and letters. Of interest, the more so as the American continent drifts off into the Pacific.

Telos 5: Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, 4714 36th Avenue NE, Seattle, WA 98105, USA. Available for trade, LoC, contributions, interesting rocks... Patrick natters on about the state of fandom, and the blind alleys thereof; R.A. MacAvoy discusses dentists; Terry Carr ranges far and wide, ho hum; John-Henri Holmberg describes sf and fandom in Stockholm; Carol Carr opens her diary here and there; Avedon Carol gives a cultural background to the murder of John Lennon. *Telos* is patchy, but worth acquiring for Avedon Carol.

Typewriters on the Loose 1: A.C. Neale & P.D. Bream, c/o 157 Longsight, Harwood, Bolton, Lancs. Available for the usual, or postage. The follow-up to 'One of our typewriters is missing', largely given over to LoCs on that zine, plus fanzine reviews, and filled out by some utterly dispensable (continued page 25)



DIRE STRAIGHTS

Mel Brooks once defined bad taste as telling the truth before it should be told and judging by the Birmingham SF Group's reaction to last issue's revelations of its committee's crass ineptitude I've just been guilty of extreme bad taste. I've even been reliably informed that the Brum Group's self-styled leadership aim to hit back with a blanket denial in this issue's letter column, an attempt to repair their tattered egos even the more absurd considering that the FACTS stated in *Matrix 43* were double-checked with the individuals involved. Curiouser and curiouser, as Alice might say.

Meanwhile, the committee (or rather Chris Morgan, with wife Pauline "the mainstays of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group" according to his biography on the Eurocon '84 handouts, rather a mammoth claim for someone who quit the committee in January) has emerged with a truly inspired scheme to prevent further criticism: expel the critics. Unable to inflict either a verbal or physical assault on yours truly at the August BSFA meeting (I escaped whilst he wasn't looking), Chris marches into the Andromeda Bookshop next morning hoping to enlist founder member Rog Peyton on the proposed lynch mob. When Rog (unwilling father figure to the committee and possibly the only member to realise just how tedious second city fandom's become of late) informs Chris that I'm not the only BSFGer to feel this way, the poor man launches into his best Joseph Stalin impression and starts calling for an immediate purge of the dissident underground. Since that would effectively eliminate the Brum Group's fannish element, I'd be intrigued to see the result of that policy.

That same morning also sees "chairman" Vernon Brown at Andromeda, distributing copies of booklets on how to run a committee (a trifle late in the day, I'd've thought, considering he's held the post since February). The first two rules, I'm told, are that (a) the committee should respect the chairman, and (b) the chairman should have a sense of humour. I only hope he scores better in the other categories.

What next, dare I ask? Informal meetings like the Solihull Group's offer no real alternative to the BSFG's large-scale activities (despite continual committee suspicion that I'm planning some kind of fannish coup, the SSFG has actually boosted its atrophied ranks), but without the financial support of Novacon, I've little doubt the second city's alleged hardcore would have crumbled long before now....

And now, in an effort to lighten the tone of this column, a short extract from *The OMNI Book of Dave Langford*....

RENDEZVOUS WITH RUMOUR: An Alleged Interview

STEVE GREEN: Tell us all about it, then, about the fascist, repressive committee which imposes its brutal will on the suffering membership (so much in need of new blood) and must be overthrown and trampled in the dust before Reading SF can rise to new and glorious heights.

DAVE LANGFORD: Well, we meet on the third Thursday of every month in a little pub near Reading General railway station. You just turn right out of the station, left at the Alder Valley bus station a little way down the road, and up the hill till you reach the Osborne Arms on your right. Shun the front bar, which will be full of mundanes, and look for sensitive fannish faces in the lounge bar at the rear - any time after 7.30 p.m., usually. In the witty throng that gathers about the fans' table you may hear many an epigram flying to and fro, sparkling like gobs of sputum, interrupted only by the genial catcalls of "It's your round, Langford". Fun for young and old alike.

STEVE: So, you'd agree that the dismal non-events of the 'Glomerule' meetings have inevitably forced a breakaway group into being?

DAVE: Well, Martin and Katy Hoare usually have a pint with me Sunday nights at the Pheasant in Whitley Street, about half a mile from Reading's centre - follow A33 Basingstoke signs till you get there, or take a 15 or 23 bus from the station. And recently we decided to call this regular event an extra Reading SF meeting, though anyone planning to drop in would be wise the check with me first on Reading (0734) 665804. Nothing happens until 8.30 to 9 p.m. at the earliest, yet numerous pints of beer are fannishly knocked back before closing time. Coffee may or may not be served somewhere afterwards.

STEVE (writes "Coca-Cola, tonic water and alcohol-free lager are the favourite drinks of this vibrantly fannish breakaway group."): And of course people have flocked in uncounded millions to this fannish alternative, eager to escape the anachronistic meetings of the main, outmoded group?

DAVE: The first Sunday to be declared an official Alternative Glomerule meeting saw a massive turnout of, actually, one. I'd forgotten that Martin and Katy were away getting pissed in Belgium.

STEVE (writes: "The weekly alternative with its boisterous hyperfannishness now lures fans from Aberdeen, Land's End, Chicago and Melbourne."): I'm glad to see this successful revolution against the established but second-rate Reading Group, dominated as it is by the soporific and moribund Dave Langford. Thank you....

DAVE: Wait a minute....

STEVE: Thank you, Keith Freeman, and goodbye!

(c) Vlad O'Redfang 1984

COASTAL WILDLIFE

Despite his exile to life in London with Cuddly Pam Wells, the almost-as-cuddly Jeff Suter retains his role as this column's Down South correspondent:

"On Saturday, 23rd October, at 7.30 p.m. the South Hants Science Fiction Group will be hosting a Southern Region BSFA meeting, at the Manor House pub in Cosham. We have a room with a bar. In response to Eve Harvey's suggestion that somebody organise regional meetings, the SHSFG decided to take her up on it and invite BSFA members from the surrounding areas to attend - especially those who have not had the opportunity to attend the monthly London meetings. Our guests will be long-time fans, fanzine producers, convention organisers, ex-Matrix editors and BSFA printing masters, Eve and John Harvey. John Bark will be interviewing them about aspects of the BSFA and their fanfash careers. Afterwards there will be an opportunity for you to talk to them and engage in that time-honoured BSFA tradition of "propping up the bar". Also, you will have a chance to meet personalities you have read about, make new friends, become acquainted with other BSFA members and find out about local sf groups. The whole thing will be fun. Hopefully other BSFA notables will attend as well.

"The pub is within walking distance of bus stops and Cosham railway station and is within easy reach of BSFA members from Brighton, Chichester, Reading, Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Salisbury, Bournemouth, Fareham, Petersfield and Portsmouth (even London). For further details contact me at 24a Beach Road, Bowes Park, London N11 (Tele: 01-899-0401) or John Bark at 5 Byerley Close, Westbourne, Emsworth, Hants PO10 8TS.

"If any BSFA members would like to take part in the southern heat of the BSFA National Mastermind, then contact me at the same address with your name and address, BSFA number and specialised subject (you can take two rounds of sf general knowledge if you wish - please indicate). Deadline for entries is 23rd October; send you entry or bring it along to me. Date of quiz to be announced."

Jeff adds that the SHSFG's fanzine *Death Rays*, edited by the aforementioned John Bark, is available to non-members for fanzines, letters of comments, contributions or by subscription (sample 50p; 4-issue sub £1.50). SHSFG members receive copies free as part of the £2.50 annual fee (cheques and postal orders made payable to the South Hants SF Group). Considering the dearth of fannish activity in this country's second-largest city, the enthusiasm pooled in Cosham is a bloody miracle.

HOLD THE FRONT PAGE etc

Jim Barker and fellow Scots planning to launch Northern Region BSFA meetings; details to follow.... Requesting details on local fandom: Alison U-Din, 14 St. George's House, St. George's Road, Bristol.... The Newcastle University SF&F Society can be reached at the Union Society, King's Walk, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.... Birmingham SF Group plays host to Fred Pohl October 8th at the Holiday Inn Hotel.... Solihull SF Group to launch fanzine this autumn; contributors include Leroy Kettle, Garry Kilworth and Bob Shaw.... Stoke-on-Trent fans to host inter-society sf quiz November 2nd at Cartwright House, Hanley; details from Joy Hibbert at 11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.... BSFA hitmen assassinate Matrix columnist.

All correspondence to: 11 Fox Green Crescent, Birmingham B27 7SD

Steve Green

Deadline for next issue: NOVEMBER 9

UPDATE ON LEEDS SF GROUP: The Leeds Group walked out of the West Riding Pub on Friday the 13th of August because one of our members was banned, due to the fact that she had been carrying an unopen can of beer which 'offended' the landlord. He said she was not to be served, EVER AGAIN! When asked nicely by several members of our large, regular, heavily-spending group the following week he said, "I don't care if she's with the whole pub, she's not staying!" We walked out en masse and have now found another venue, the Adelphi Hotel. What a good feeling of solidarity we have!!!

(continued from page 23)

chat by the lads themselves. Nicely produced, with occasional - very occasional - flashes of wit, but mostly a barren field so far as content goes. Memo to Andrew: you ought to engage your brain before inserting the stencil into the typewriter; that way you tend to get better words.

New readers might like to know what 'the usual' means, which entails Letter of Comment, Contribution, Artwork, respectful request (try including return postage).

Well, that's it. A substantial bundle this time, and anyone out there who wants another 'Down Palace Walls' column could send their zines to me, Martyn Taylor, at 5 Kimptom Road, Camberwell, London, SE5 7EA, U.K. By the time you read this I'll have moved to the Isle of Man, so have a look at the CoA section. You may see me there.



FILM & TV NEWS: SIMON BOSTOCK
 BOOK NEWS: THE EDITORS
 OTHER NEWS: THE EDITORS
 SOURCES: LOCUS; STARBURST;
 BIRMINGHAM SF GROUP;
 NIK MORTON; SANDY
 BROWN

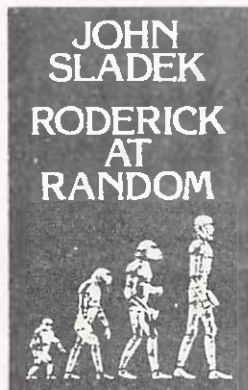
FILM AND TV NEWS

Latest sci-fi/fantasy on video includes *Embryo*, *Altered States*, *Demon Seed* and *Excalibur*... *Poltergeist* is an X certificate, but PG in America (which usually means AA)... *Blade Runner* is an AA; it was to have an X, but the violence has been trimmed. In fact, fifteen minutes has been deleted from the final version and an introduction has been added for the 'thicky' audience that cannot make sense of it without... *The Thing*, John Carpenter's latest, has in some quarters been dubbed Better than *Alien*, and purports to be fairly faithful to the Campbell short story - I've already read one report saying that the contrary is true... Channel 4 are negotiating to screen the tv sf series, *The Prisoner*, god bless 'em!... John Landis, famous for *The Blues Brothers* and *An American Werewolf in London*, is going to make a remake of *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*...

BOOK NEWS

CAPE: 30 Sept 82: *Myths of the New Future*, J.G. Ballard (£1.95) - collection of new and reprinted short stories from the psycho-sleuth of the inner-world. Includes a reprint from *Interzone* (fame at last!) and is probably the closest you'll ever get to perfection.

GRANADA: 6 Jan 83: Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, *Cautionary Tales* (£1.50)



An Isaac Asimov reprint, *The Martian Way* (£1.50)

John Sladek's *Roderick at Random* (£1.95) The sequel to *Roderick* which fulfills the promise of *Roderick* and demonstrates that Sladek is one of the finest American writers writing about adolescent robots who is alive and living in Britain today!

PENGUIN: 30 Sep 82: Tom Reamy's *Blind Voices* (£1.75) - cover far inferior to the US edition. Excellent novel by Mr Reamy who died before the success of his book - one of the best novels of the last ten years.



GOLLANCE: Richard Cower, *A Tapestry of Time* (£6.95) - third in the series, following *Road to Conlay* and *A Dream of Kinship*.

Ursula Le Guin, *The Eye of the Heron* (£6.95) - first edition as a separate volume, but previously available in a collection *Eye of the Heron and Other Stories*.

Robert Silverberg, *Majipoor Chronicles* (£8.95) best-seller in US - a collection of ten stories about "Life on Majipoor".

Ian Watson, *Swistroke and Other Stories* (£7.95). As the title suggest, a collection of short stories, including "The World SF Convention of 2080" and others previously available.

CORGI: John Brunner, *Into the Slave Nebula* (£1.50)

POCKET: Jack Chalker, *The Identity Matrix* (£1.95) a new identity Matrix, eh?

SPHERE: Stephen Couper, *Dying of Paradise* (£1.70) - 25 Nov 82.

Harry Harrison, *The Stainless Steel Rat for President* (£1.25) - 16 Dec 82.

Fred Pohl will be at a signing session at Andromeda Books (84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham) on October 9th at noon.

Many other very famous people, including ashen-faced, tight-lipped Dave Pringle will be present at *SCIENCE FICTION UNLIMITED* which will be held on Saturday 23 October 1982 at the Royal Pavillion Hotel, Brighton. This is part of an exhibition, called "Out of the World" organised by Brighton Borough Council. The Science Fiction Unlimited day will be chaired by David Pringle and will comprise various talks, including Colin Greenland, and John Brunner whose speech is entitled "I deal in Futures". A visit to the exhibition is included in the admission charge, which is humbly priced at £2.00. There will also be a special showing of an sf film but, for copyright reasons, we are not allowed to state what it is; it has not been previously issued, but if you're prone to sheepish dreams then this day will provide a welcome filip. Tickets from The Administration Office, Royal Pavillion, Brighton (tel. Brighton 603005).

Last issue I published details of a course in *MODERN SPECULATIVE WRITING* to be held at the Dillington House College and Arts Centre from 21-23 January 1983; Chris Priest is the Tutor. I have now received a confirmatory booklet on the course which is available from the Booking Secretary at the Dillington House College, Ilminster, Somerset TA19 9DT.

CONTRIBUTIONS are invited for a publication concerned with essays on the social and philosophical speculations generated by and in science fiction. Topic areas are Nature and Artifice; The Philosophy of the Inhuman; Reds under the Beds (social utopias); Fiction. Details from The Editor, Hof ter Bollen 51, B2672, Liezele Puurs, Belgium. Publication will include the English language.

A Japanese electric wire maker claims to have produced a *ROBOT* that not only moves, sees and hears, but tells you in "a synthesised feminine voice" if you get in its way and "works its single arm as delicately as the human equivalent." Sumitomo Electrical Industries claim that, although it is just the forerunner of a full-scale intelligent robot, it will obey an oral instruction to "pick up a given object and carry it to an appointed place." The robot is controlled by 14 unnamed micros and a mini-computer - all connected by optical fibres. On an even less user-friendly note, Denning Systems in the US has developed a most unpleasant "*SENTRY ROBOT*". Weighing 200 pounds ("to make it difficult to steal"), this robot uses long-range radar to spot people, takes the shortest route to them to "confirm its suspicions with infra-red heat sensors," radios the police and "sounds a physically painful 120-decibel siren" if you touch it.

Some satisfaction was achieved for the campaigners for payment for authors for their books borrowed from public libraries with the enactment of the *PUBLIC LENDING RIGHT SCHEME*. The scheme will be based on a sample of sixteen libraries and payments made to authors who apply under the scheme; there is a ceiling on payment of £5000. The exact payment will depend not just on the number of books lent, but also on other factors, such as the number of pages in a book.

The US Justice Department does not intend to intervene in the sale of *GROSSET/ACE* to Putnam (see *Matrix* 43); the takeover took effect on July 1st. Ace has now ceased to be a company after 30 years publishing; many of the Ace staff were made redundant.

On May 24, Dave Britton of Savoy Books was sentenced to 28 days prison for "having for gain seven books found to be obscene." This results from a bust of the *MANCHESTER BOOKSHOP* (see previous editions of *Matrix*). It appears that the police can now take an action and succeed in prosecution on a purely arbitrary basis; the books in question had been freely available for some time and Savoy's books included works by Charles Platt and Samuel Delany. What price freedom in this country? And on what basis was Dave Britton busted?

F&SF is going up in price in the U.S. to \$1.75, with effect from the October issue. *SF Digest* is apparently in trouble and a double issue, containing parts of "Friday" by Heinlein may be the last for the time being. Meanwhile, the new *Amazing*, edited by George Scithers, will be released at the World Convention this month.

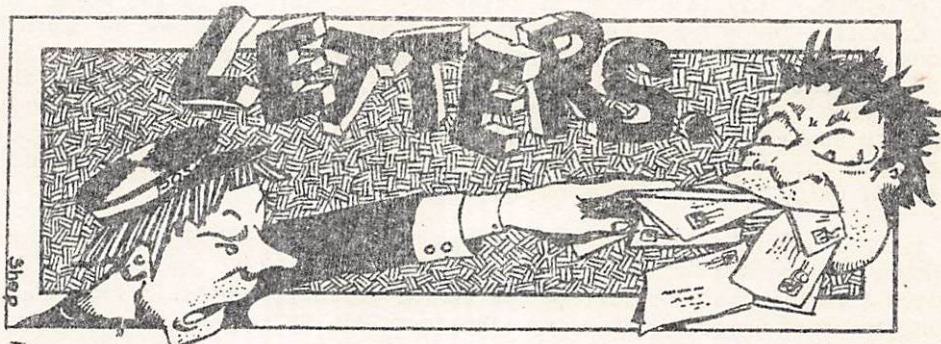
IAN WATSON Writes Star Trek Novel....., well, it is called *Chekov's Journey*, but its literary leanings are to the Russian Playwright and not the Enterprising Playboy. David Mattingly has sold movie rights for a *POSTER* - yes - a poster; it is quite striking and entitled "Flying High". Roger Corman bought the rights; hmmm, wonder if he'd take movie rights for a *Matrix* cover? Mike Moorcock is working on *The Laughter of Carthage*, a sequel to *Byzantium Endures*

At a meeting of the Science Fiction Research Association, the winner of the *JOHN W. CAMPBELL MEMORIA AWARD* was announced - perhaps to the pleasure of Greg Pickersgill, one of the book's earliest and foremost advocates, the winner was *Ridley Walker*, by Russell Hoban. The panel who decided the award included Tom Shippey, Kingsley Amis and Harry Harrison.

In a convention report on an American Convention (Unicon '82), published in *Locus*, Jeff Schalles commented, "The vandalism, alas, was still present this year, with yahoos damaging the men's room and stopping elevator services with smoke bombs. There seems to be a small but growing sub-fandom of young punk-style illiterates. We certainly don't need (or deserve) this." I wonder what Schalle would make of Phil Paimer's coloured hair-dos, but there again, Phil isn't illiterate, is he?

Chris Donaldson and Paul Oldroyd are now the proud parents of a baby girl named Helen. She was born on Friday, September 10th in the wee small hours of the morning at St. James's Hospital in Leeds. Mum and baby are now at home and doing right fine. Ring them up with congrats and they'll regale you with stories of every gurgle and smile. It's one way to get more females into fandom!

I take the view that if someone takes time out to write a letter of comment to Space Habitat, then their thoughts should be studied by me and considered for inclusion in the fanzine. Straight-forward enough, eh? Well, not so, because some people consider that if they do write, then I am somehow duty-bound to include their letter, lock, stock, and barrel.



I have to judge a letter, not only on what it says, but on whether or not it is well written, of interest to more than just the author, and if it will fit in place in the letter column along with the views and comments from other correspondents. OK, sometimes I stray from those standards, and include an outrageous comment (it serves to motivate sleeping members as did the D. West cover for my first issue of Matrix) - but I do try, with the letters column, to make it into a cohesive and flowing column. Vaulting from one subject to another without pause for consideration of more than one viewpoint on a subject gives rise to mental indigestion. In the case of a magazine such as Matrix, which no-one is forced to read, if the BSFA member cannot swallow the contents, then he/she will choose not to sample them in future.

The same rules of composition for an article or column should apply when compiling the letters page; that is, introduction, logical presentation of views for and against, summary, conclusion. When it comes to what I call fannish writing, the all-encompassing rule is timing; this is something which I believe, one can best learn from experience (by doing it and by example). Very few fans have this quality - most just bluster ahead with their argument, disregarding (or not seeing) any opposing viewpoint and not taking into account that their words will be read by people they know, personally; people who have similar interests and are involved in a common activity. That facet (relationship between writer and reader) sets fannish writing apart from virtually all other forms of written mass communication, i.e., newspapers, periodicals, books.

What is timing? Explanation is more difficult - it is, perhaps, not dissimilar from trying to describe a trip or a high. One example might be when the writer has the mental juices flowing and is constructing a line of argument, he/she pauses and poses a question. A question which follows, logically and objectively. The reader finds that that same question is one which he/she is just thinking of. Ever had that feeling? It is a very special, perhaps even magic, quality and, very rarely, does it come from writing off the top of one's head; it takes first draft, re-draft, and real hard work. The better fannish writers (and a good case in point is/was Greg Pickersgill) will vouch for this. As I said, very few writers have this quality and it is one which I think I have begun to appreciate only through fanzine activity, over the last few years.

I remarked in one of my earlier issues that I wanted Matrix to become far more of a "fannish" zine. I think I knew what I wanted, but I probably didn't know quite how to go about it. Although there has been good writing in these pages (Ounsley, Langford, Taylor, Hansen and others), I have tended towards the side of sensationalism. Perhaps that word is too strong - but what I mean is that I have given coverage to issue of concern, i.e., Censorship, Nuclear Weapons Proliferation, Unemployment, Political Questions. All very good for keeping up street credibility, but I look back and wonder whether a well-written article on the fate of a crustacean (I refer to one of Bob Shaw's fannish pieces) wouldn't have moved and aroused members and done more to fulfill the BSFA's purpose.

I find that a dogmatic and biased viewpoint (even if it be on a subject with which I share the view of the author) is more likely to annoy and alienate me, whereas an article of style, wit and pace will, whatever the subject matter (racism excluded), cause me to think deeper. OK - we can all play the "more meaningful than you" game, but I am beginning to appreciate now that subtlety in writing will evoke emotions that can raise spirits and move mountains, whereas dogmatism of the party political variety is, at best, pointless and, at worst, likely to create an antithesis....

A line from Dylan's masterpiece, "Hard Rain":-

"I saw a black branch with blood that kept dripping"

moved me to tears (and arms, I'm sad to say), but more importantly, it moved me to understanding. Its meaning is not obvious at first (at least it wasn't many years ago when I first heard it), but it hits pretty hard when you figure it out.

I often see the National Front on the street corner in Leeds; invariably they are confronted by particular "Anti-Nazi" groups; whatever the merits of combatting and opposing the repugnant views of NF, the tactics adopted by the opposing groups merely reinforce those racist views and propagate the violence which fires the NF. Perhaps an "NF help-line" is what is needed?

With many of the letters I have received over these past two years, I have tended to chop the general, chatty and friendly introductions and go straight for the meat and controversy. This has made the letter column quite interesting (and, so it seems, the main attraction), but I may have paid too much attention to content and not enough to construction. I have tended to jump on innocent remarks (and D. has illustrated them) in much the same way as Michael Ashley demonstrates:-

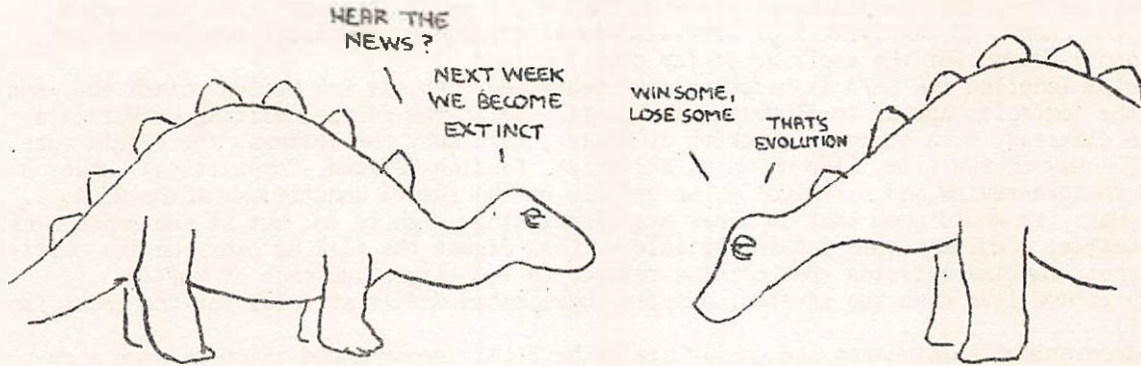
MICHAEL ASHLEY
86 ST. JAMES ROAD
MITCHAM SURREY CR4 2DB

Last issue there were your comments and D. West's cartoon while this issue you have two more sarcastic jibes yourself plus there's Arnold Akien's galumphing humour. I dunno, make one halfway dodgy statement and you pay for it the rest of your life. Hardly an outrageous statement, though, suggesting that the much-maligned Ken Mann was the only person to point out that maybe,

possibly, perhaps cartoons placed alongside text, perhaps, possibly, maybe affect how the reader responds to that text. I think that they are affected, though I suppose not necessarily in the banal, simplistic way I suggested last time (Geoff Rippington says something similar in the current *Vector*: "People are affected by what they read, see and hear").

It's enough to make me wary of saying anything, but Rob Hansen's comments deserve a reply.

Anyone new to fandom will be puzzled over this distinction between BSFA fandom and what Rob Hansen calls "fandom proper". It's a distinction that stems from the Seventies when there was a large convention-going, fanzine-producing group none of whom were involved in the BSFA. So I'm told, this group were Vibrant, Creative, Healthy. The BSFA, on the other hand, weren't. Obviously it



seemed then a waste of time to leave a fandom busy raising standards, pushing back the barriers of fanwriting, etc to participate in an apparently terminally useless BSFA. Rob's problem appears to be rigid and out-of-date defini-

tion of the term "fandom proper". Rob's "fandom proper" is still that of Greg Pickersgill, Leroy Kettle, the Charnox, *et al.* whose manifestations in fanzine fandom today include Malcolm Edwards's *Tappen*, Rob's own *Epsilon*, and not a lot else. As far as I'm concerned, "fandom proper" is a variable term, the property of whichever group of fans is most dominant at the present time, i.e., a group producing quality work regularly, coming up with new ideas, encouraging new fans, and so on. This isn't the case with Rob's Golden-Age-of-Fandom lookalikes: if the title of "fandom proper" is still valid today, then the BSFA could claim it with some success (if only by default). So while it used to be that belonging to the BSFA meant being outside of fandom, the opposite is nearer the truth today: those not belonging to the BSFA are missing out on a lot of fannish activity, some of it worth while. Those who don't join because they feel that the BSFA is not "fandom proper" or that the fanzines are not "real" fanzines are doing so for what are now rather snobbish reasons.

If the BSFA is an important element in fandom today (and it is) then the importance of *Matrix* has to be stressed: it is today the only serious contender for the title of "focal British fanzine" due to its frequent publication, influence on new fans, regular featuring of leading British fanwriters (such as Dave Langford and Simon Ounsley), its coverage of various matters of fannish interest (convention finances, awards, politics in fandom, and so on), heated (if not always well argued) letter column... What more do you want? (Well, a bit more than that, but it's still more than any other single British fanzine.) Given this, I think it's important that *Matrix* should be available quite openly to people who don't belong to the BSFA and who don't want to belong to the BSFA (either because they feel that the BSFA as it is at the moment is not worthy of support or because they have little or no interest in the science fictional side of things and refuse to shell out £6 just for six issues of *Matrix*) for the same reasons as any other fanzine, e.g., letters of comment or articles. This way of getting the fanzine occurs only in a few cases and is hardly emphasised inside or outside the BSFA (on the editorial address page only a subscription is mentioned). Treating *Matrix* as just another fanzine rather than as an organ of that dreadful BSFA organisation may lead to a greater participation by those whom you call "experienced fans" (certainly in theory; after all, Rob Hansen contributes to *Epsilon* so he should really contribute to *Matrix* - a better fanzine in many ways)

This idea of *Matrix* as (deep breath) the most important and influential British fanzine of today has a number of implications which you and the committee should be aware of. Like finding the next editor, someone who has to be able to deal with the various obligations, responsibilities, duties, etc. as editor of such a fanzine. If this is shirked, then *Matrix* will become just as peripheral and small-time as in previous years and fandom, currently in a particularly torpid state (i.e., more so than usual), will have lost one of its liveliest zines - indeed, at the moment the only such fanzine.

Doubtless there's lots to make fun of in this letter, too, though I'd rather you didn't. Personally I agree with Jim England and demand that you don't print anything by M. Ashley who is not a member of the BSFA and indeed never has been (G. Ashley maybe, but not me).

No, I don't wish to make fun of your letter, Mike; in fact, your comments are particularly important and have some validity in terms of the future of *Matrix* (more of that elsewhere). Much in the same way that I took your comments last issue (for fun, not for genocide), I also took Rob's comments rather out-of-context. Like you, I find the attitude which seems to be purveyed by "fandom proper" rather superior and isolationist. This is a view which I have heard many times from other fans (some of whom have written to this effect - no "petitions" though), and this has had rather unfortunate effects. Kettle, Brosnan, etc will, for example, read and write to a U.S. fanzine but will ignore most British efforts. There is a very definite division/separation between those fans to whom you refer and "the rest" of the fannish fans. Even now, the reconstituted Malcolm Edwards, and Rob Hansen, seem to want to go "mid-Atlantic" and do not really think very much of the BSFA; I know Malcolm "did his bit" some years ago. It is a pity, because, with little doubt, Kettle and Rob Hansen are fannish writers of the highest quality. As I said, I think Rob's comments did need some

further explanation (and would have done so if he knew that I intended to publish his letter) but, whilst we are with them, more from Nik Morton on this point:-

NIK MORTON
235 WEST STREET
FAREHAM HANTS PO16 0HZ

Sorry to see you go!

Rob Hansen's remarks bring the spotlight to bear on the *raison d'etre* of the BSFA. Surely the BSFA does encourage and promote fandom. Many individuals, either ex-BSFA or existing members, have probably gained new friendships, correspondents - even co-respondents! - broadened their viewpoints, increased their knowledge, all through the aegis of the BSFA. It is a central clearing-house - of ideas, of controversy, of reviews, of news and miscellaneous sf-data "that might be of interest". Further, with *Vector* there is the chance to wax lyrical or otherwise in sf criticism; and *Focus* presents an all-too-infrequent agony-column for the aspiring sf (or other) writer.

This organism labelled the BSFA is becoming many-tentacled, yet, as Rob Hansen points out, and I fear, whilst the tentacles appear to flourish, the heart - be it the fannish writing or *Matrix's* contents - is in disarray, even starved. Looking at *Matrix*, take away the letters, the regular departments (News, A Day in the Life, Life on Mars, Editorial, Fanzine Reviews, Competition), what have we got? A theatre-review and, ironically, an article on the future constitution of the BSFA.... Reading *Life on Mars*, it would seem that fanzines are flourishing, rightly so, but at the expense of the BSFA-zine, *Matrix*. Couldn't some fanzine article-writers digest the flak or constructive criticism regarding their fanzine articles then offer a rewrite to the larger audience of *Matrix*? (I would, though up to now I've done the reverse, adapting unaccepted *Matrix* articles for the local fanzine *Death Rays*!)

Gardens, decorating, maintenance and family are to be highly recommended. You deserve a respite - but the BSFA's survival also depends on a dedicated core, and we on the other end of the mailing-list owe them our thanks for their single-mindedness. (And while I'm at it, many thanks to you, Graham & Linda, for providing a lively, interesting *Matrix*, appreciating that a great deal of behind-the-scenes work goes into each issue.)

Again, many thanks for your stalwart efforts. Best of luck in whatever you tackle next.

Yes, you are right; more articles are needed and I have tried in this area. If you look over the last 13 issues you'll find plenty of articles, but there are some issues where I have failed to produce material other than the regular columns. Whilst the regular columns are good in themselves, I have tended to over-rely on these on occasions. The simple reason is that these make life much easier; soliciting submissions (which are faithfully promised and never arrive) and chasing interviews needs a lot of time. To fill around 250 pages of A4 each year (more if you count the reductions) is no joke if you have to carry on other essential life activities.....like Friday nights in Leeds.....

DAVID V BARRETT
51 MAYFIELD GROVE
HARROGATE
N YORKS HG1 5HD

Re: *Matrix* 43 - Bloody awful cover - boring. And what's with all this 'Space Habitat' stuff? (Duh, I thort the mag was corld *Matrix*...) Like your method of choosing the next Editor - so long as I don't have to do it!

So, Rob Hansen thinks the BSFA is 'ultimately futile' and has 'out-lived its usefulness.' If everybody shared his attitude, then it would be, but fortunately we have people like Nick Shears, whose penultimate paragraph says it all: we ought to be getting up off our backsides and doing something, not sitting around moaning about the futility and uselessness of the BSFA.

EXCUSE ME
OFFICER

HAVE YOU SEEN
A BUNCH OF
DRUNKS, ALL
SHOUTING AND
CURSING AND
FALLING
OVER?



LEEDS SF
GROUP?
THEY WENT
THAT WAY
MORE OR
LESS

But, oh, what a revealing comment by you, Graham; perhaps, without being personally offensive, it is time you got out of the whole scene before we have a full-scale epidemic of negativity, lethargy, ennui and sheer nothingness - all highly contagious. I'd question the 'disintegrating Leeds Group,' unless you simply mean that a number of members of the Mafia are emigrating from Leeds. I've only been in the group since Christmas; bodies

may come and go, but the free 'n' easy boozin' group lives on. (It'd better do; I enjoy my Friday nights there.)

Arnold Akien's comment on D. West's drinking reminds me that he (D.) once bought me a drink. Pause to savour fully the uniqueness of this experience..... See you some Friday.

Hmmm, did I give the impression of superiority or bemoaning the times of the 'old' Leeds Group, much in the same way as Rob's "fandom proper"? Interesting that without the Leeds Group, *Matrix* would have been a far weaker product; I have relied heavily on contributions from Leeds fans (a fact not altogether recognised). Simon Ounsley, D. West and Pete Lyon (and others) have always figured prominently - as to whether the fannish world would have been different had *Matrix* been edited elsewhere, Joseph's comments below provide some clues:-

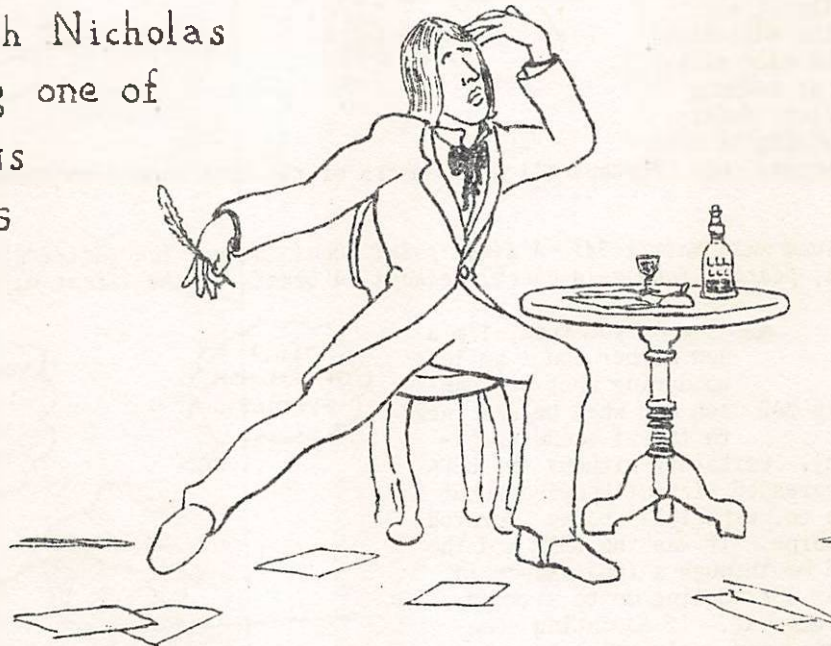
JOSEPH NICHOLAS
22 DENBIGH STREET
PIMLICO LONDON SW1V 2ER

A letter to *Matrix*, by God, and for the first time in....well, I suppose it must be a year, but it seems much longer (although I can't for the life of me work out why). Anyway....

I read Rob Hansen's comments with interest, since (of course) they apply not only to you but to everyone else currently involved in running the BSFA, but his claim (implied or otherwise, but that's the way I read it) that if we weren't working for the Association we'd be working for general fandom instead seems extremely dubious - that is, there's nothing to suggest that if we pulled out and left the BSFA to its own devices we would automatically and of necessity start producing more fanzines of our own. I can't speak for anyone else (and I certainly wouldn't want to) but, while I might have got myself elected to the Council for one set of reasons, they're not the reasons that have kept me involved in it. It so happens that, over the past three or four years, I have derived a great deal of enjoyment from doing what I do, and certainly don't consider any of it at all "futile". Then, too, there's the fact that my interests have changed over the past three or four years (as one might expect they would have done); whereas I was once more concerned with fanish matters, I am now more concerned with sercon ones, and (short of publishing my own sercon fanzine) know of no other place in Britain where I could exercise that concern, at least not with the consistency and regularity that the BSFA offers. So, if I were to leave the BSFA tomorrow, I doubt very much that I would plunge straight back into general fandom and start emitting fanzines left, right and centre; there simply wouldn't be an audience for what I wanted to say. Of course, three or four years after leaving the BSFA my interests might have changed sufficiently that I would again wish to write fanish rather than sercon material, but by that time the low level of activity and the attendant problems thereof about which Rob is complaining would as like as not be a problem of the past.

But, to save Rob the trouble of wondering whether, in the light of those remarks, I'll ever put out another issue of *Napalm in the Morning*, I'll state here and now that I have every intention of doing so - provided that I can find a suitable subject for the main article. Various ideas have suggested themselves over the past twelve months, but on closer scrutiny none of them have proved viable enough; yet I do need a main article because it's been so long since the fourth issue that

Mr Joseph Nicholas
composing one of
his famous
sentences



I can't hope to generate much response with the sort of bits and pieces with which I filled that. And, yes, I will publish my GUFF trip report - but before I can do that I shall have to rewrite, from my notes and my memory, a fairly substantial proportion of my much-touted quarter-of-a-million-word-long first draft, since a chunk of it seems to have disappeared entirely. Not in my recent move of house, but in the general clear-

ring-up I did before Judith's arrival here in March; and the loss of all that work is dispiriting enough without the thought of all the rewriting necessary to reclaim it. Which will, of course, further delay the fifth issue of *Napalm in the Morning*....

Not, perhaps, that any of this is particularly relevant to Rob's complaint (although he may well suggest that if I wasn't putting so much energy into my BSFA writings I'd be putting it into the trip report and that fifth issue - to which I would reply that the first draft of the report and all four issues of *Napalm* were produced at the same time as all those reviews and articles, thus possibly negating his point). But I'm at a loss to understand Jim England's - surely, if *Matrix* is a forum for members, then its pages are open to them to discuss whatever they like, be it CND, conventions, other people's fanzines, or general gossip? To rule this material as ineligible for inclusion on the grounds that it does not have enough (or anything) to do with science fiction strikes me as extremely blinkered and selective...but perhaps I'm misinterpreting him, because later in his letter he calls for the magazine to adopt a more mature attitude. Even so, to be more mature about something means (in this context) that it should be written about in a more intelligent and interesting fashion, not that it is beneath notice and should be avoided wherever possible. Dave Langford's *Anzible*, for example, is full of gossip, wit and inventive lies, but nobody is ever likely to denounce that as immature simply because it is so well-written and so intelligent in its presentation that, *vide* Jim's complaint, it is perfectly comprehensible to "the average reader" (whoever he or she may really be).

Comprehensible indeed; but part of the attraction may be the mystique because, if I printed notes of explanation with all articles, it would be comprehensible, but incomprehensible. Comprenez-vous?

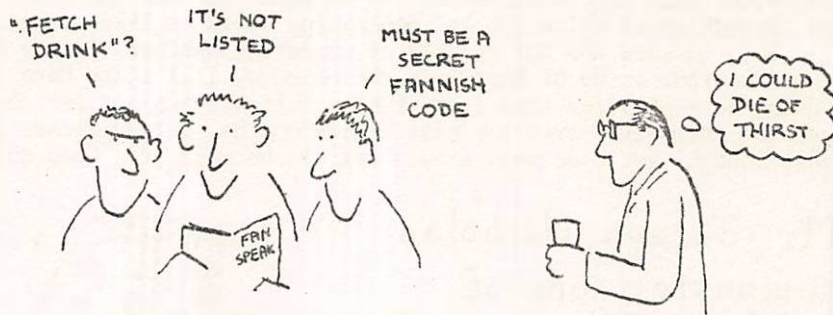
MIKE LEWIS
5 YEW TREE CLOSE
BROADSTAIRS
KENT CT10 2LR

I liked the Dave Langford piece, but then I've liked most (if not) all that I've read by him. I think the 'A Day in The Life!' pieces are a very good idea, and give a certain insight into how you can live while writing for a living! Keep them up; who have you got lined up for future issues?

You are right, I would agree with the point made by Marjorie Brunner, about sf publications covering much more than sf. I would have thought that, despite the BSFA existing because of sf, it was important for us to be aware of other things outside - otherwise we are going to become inbred. A gathering of fans who are linked by a common interest in one thing, whether it be Perry Rhodan, Comics, or whatever - surely should discuss other subjects - after all, when at work you don't just discuss work, do you?

To answer Jim England's comments on *Matrix*, I would have thought that the Critical Journal of the BSFA was *Vector* (at least that's what it calls itself) - and that *Matrix* was designed to be much more "fannish" to deal with sfen and what they do. It isn't intended to be a 'serious' magazine - *Vector* is that (perhaps that is the reason for the differences in the printing methods - *Matrix* being more in a fannish style?).

I agree with Lawrence O'Donnell - when you first receive a mailing, it is like a foreign language! However, as you read more (and are helped by such as the guide to fannish terms printed in *Matrix*, erm, whatever number it was), you become more involved, and eventually it all makes sense - even the editorial! Possibly, it could be made easier for newcomers, but, as someone commented in an earlier *Matrix*, it would be pretty boring if each issue was an introductory one! Perhaps all new members of the BSFA should be issued with a 'fan dictionary'?



Fan dictionary? Issued with Matrix 38! A final point about the use (or futility) of the BSFA is made by Gary Andrews, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, perhaps on behalf of the silent majority:-

GARY D. ANDREWS
327 ASHBY ROAD
SCUNTHORPE
SOUTH HUMBERSIDE DN16 2AB

As you know, I'm a new member and I am left wondering what Rob Hansen did when he was 'new' to the sf scene (book-

shops, fanzines, etc). Certainly without the BSFA I could not have progressed without knowing about sf places I could go to, especially being isolated in lonely old Scunthorpe. It was the BSFA and the BSFA alone which led me through a renaissance in my reading as well as introducing me to sf magazines and fandom in general. If educating somebody about sf (directly and indirectly) is not a purpose, as well as being a mine of information, then what is?

By the looks of Jim England's letter he is a supporter of *Extro*. I found that statement horrific. To say that there are quite literally factions inside sf, both intelligent, trying to blow each other off the map is disgusting. There is a general tendency in this world to think everything is black or white, which is plainly idiotic and should not occur at such a level of intelligence plainly present in the BSFA. I think both magazines are good, both producing (in my opinion) three outstanding pieces so far, with *Extro* publishing the only two awful pieces as yet, but otherwise maintaining a higher general standard than *Interzone*. In answer to a possible question: no, I haven't changed my mind since my first published letter; it is *Interzone* that has improved dramatically, 'culminating' in the dizzy heights of 'Memories of the Space Age' by J.G. Ballard, and besides it was the comments after it that put me up as a purely pro-*Extro* fan; I was merely pointing out the deficiency in coverage between the two magazines, and the plain bias in favour of *Interzone* which has now stopped, although, I think, a little grudgingly?



The *Interzone/Extro* battle was an interesting one - one where I overstepped my mark, unintentionally, by promoting *Interzone* but criticising *Extro*. I was a member of the *Interzone* collective and I suppose I was passionately intent on its success, especially since I founded the initial ideas with David Pringle. My comments on *Extro* were not made with malice, but I knew, as did others, that *Extro* had little chance of success. Much of the story behind the magazine would take far too much space to tell in these columns, but it was sheer stupidity to try and launch that magazine with a

massive distribution through W.H. Smiths; their financial motivations wouldn't allow them to be altruistic and they ditched it poste-haste; that's left Extro very high and very dry. It is a Catch 22 between supporting a venture in the hope of making it work and warning people off to save their money because you know it will fail. I didn't steer people away, indeed I tried to promote it - but perhaps all those who knew the background did the rest an injustice? As to Interzone, that does have a good chance of continuing even though they have financial problems to solve. And, with problems to solve, solutions to hand, on that vexed question of "intelligent" computers:-

NIGEL E. RICHARDSON
9 WINDSOR GREEN
EAST GARFORTH
LEEDS LS25 2LG

As to the lettercol (I think I'm getting the hang of this fannish jargon) in Matrix 43, I see that the crusty old carthorse of defining intelligence has cropped up again. Are computers intelligent? As someone who works on a decrepid ICL System 4 machine, I'd probably have to say no, but then, such machines are not designed to be intelligent; it is just a combination of adding machine, printer, filing cabinets and nctepad and no-one would call any of those things intelligent.



But to deny that any computer has any intelligence is plain dumb. The O.E.D. defines intelligence as 'the faculty of understanding', which might not satisfy some of your correspondents but, if it's good enough for Dr Murray it'll do for me. Can a machine understand then? Of course; if I load a certain program into my ZX-81 and then ask it for the lowest factor of 989345237, it will understand my command and do so (several thousand times faster than any human being, naturally). However, if I ask this program to list alphabetically the Ornette Coleman albums in my record collection, it won't be able to do so. The computer either understands the input or it doesn't.

But, if it doesn't, it does understand that a mistake has been made! Therefore, in both cases it shows understanding and, therefore, intelligence.

Finally, can I ask how all you people find time to read and write fanzines? I manage about three hours reading a day, but that time is taken up at present with Charles Dickens, Jacques Derrida and The Golden Bough; I hardly have time to read even short sf stories. Is there some special speed reading technique you employ?

How do I find the time? Well, it's quite easy; I sleep for only 55 minutes each day (in my lunch hour at work); write fanzines and Matrix at my desk (à la Tolkien Civil Servant); obtain my food by intervenous drip; dig over my garden with plastic explosives; edit the letters in the smallest room; and read books in the bath. Of course, in my spare time, I think of ways of how to make Matrix "thicker":-

SIMON BOSTOCK
18 GALLOWES INN CLOSE
ILKESTON
DERBYSHIRE DE7 4BW

Matrix 43 (or should I say Space Habitat ??) was good as usual, but a little on the lean side, as you admit. Hopefully your last issue will be a bit thicker (sic).

I can't help thinking that the statement on page two - "the BSFA also wishes to point out that some of the views are probably wrong" - was aimed specifically at me, with regards to that crap WMSFG bit by Jim England. England accuses me of being "instrumental in nipping the WMSFG in the bud", which to me makes no sense at all. Possibly Jim hasn't read the two issues I edited, because in the lettercol of Evenstar nearly everyone remarked on the great job I was doing; but if that's so, why the hell is he commenting on my false "Kiss of Death" approach (which Geoff Boswell almost certainly meant as a joke)? The thing that really got me, though, was the conclusion that I was being rotten for not printing the clubzine and that I was doing a disservice to sf and its readers. I edited Evenstar on the condition that I would time out the camera-ready copy and Geoff would photocopy it on his firm's xerox machine. I never printed it, and wouldn't have, even if I'd been asked. I suggest England looks before he leaps in future.

Another thing that begs an answer is the letter from Kev Rattan and Bernard Earp, which brought back the subject of the petition, and said I'd caught the wrong end of the stick. The copy of the petition I was sent, in the hope that I would sign, went as follows:

"We, the undersigned, feel that Chuck Connor, as a member of the BSFA, is entitled to the right of reply in Matrix, a society journal, when he is attacked in Matrix by other members. Matrix is not the personal property of the editor, but should be for the interest and enjoyment of the society as a whole, rather than a place where the editor vents his feelings upon a member, taking advantage of the large circulation of Matrix to ensure that his views are widely known, but not those of other members who disagree with him."

Well, perhaps I did misinterpret it slightly, but at least it brought to light the fiendish plot which I don't exactly endorse. I don't want to dwell on it too long - the Chuck Connors vs Graham James battle has supposedly finished - but let me just add that you asked him to write about certain things and he didn't oblige, so you declined to print it...what's wrong with that, I ask you? Censorship? An editor of any publication has to chop things sometimes. If Chuck didn't like being cut out, he could always have printed it in IDOMO or, perhaps, sent a flyer with a BSFA mailing. I didn't cry when my page-long letter on apas (in reply to Simon Ounsley) was chopped down to one paragraph. I've even taken measures to ensure that my reply to Jim England gets known if you decide not to publish it, by covering the thing in my own fanzine Proton. What it gets down to is that you're the editor - you have the right to either publish or not; granted, you have a certain loyalty to your readers, but surely that loyalty doesn't extend to printing everybody's grumble sent your way? I think not.

I thought long and hard about cutting Simon's letter (since the "petition" is now rather boring), but I changed my mind, because of the following observation from Sandy Brown:- "I thought I might let you know that, in regards to that "petition" re: Chuck Connors mentioned in last M's lettercolumn, two out of the six names mentioned in the quoted letter are not BOSFA members. Which makes me wonder how many of the unnamed other 24 signatories were also not members." Cute, eh? Simon also manages to crystalize the point I made in my opening remarks about expectations of a letter being printed. That issue really did open up a can of worms over censorship when I began printing some letters pro-CND. Simon added that I don't have to print everybody's grumble, but I do feel duty-bound to print some grumbles directed against one of my columnists, since I received a letter from the Vice-Chairman of the Brum SF Group, a letter signed by the Brum SF Group Committee, and a letter from Pauline Morgan, which all sought to correct certain statements in the 'Life on Mars' column.

PAULINE MORGAN, EDITOR
BRUM GROUP NEWSLETTER
39 HOLLYBROW
SELLY OAK
BIRMINGHAM B29 4LX

May I respectfully request that you ask the contributors to *Matrix* to either check their facts, or obtain more reliable sources of information before submitting their copy to you. I refer specifically to the part of Steve Green's article 'Life on Mars' (*Matrix* 43) entitled 'Second City, Second Rate'. This contains a number of statements concerning the Birmingham Science Fiction Group committee meetings which are comprehensive-

ly incorrect. This is a fact. I was there, and he wasn't. I am forced to believe that he is misinterpreting second-hand remarks, is misinformed, or is just lying. This is not, to my certain knowledge, the first time this has happened, and if he can be so inaccurate about a group of which he is a member, I wonder how much more fiction is contained in his column.

Perhaps readers would like to judge from a few facts:

1. Steve was asked to resign as BSFG newsletter editor in 1979 because he was turning it into a Steve Green personalzine and only mentioning the Group meetings as an afterthought on the last page.
2. He is a failed reviewer for the BSFG newsletter, generally submitting inadequate reviews later than promised or not at all.
3. He has already libelled people in the 'Life on Mars' column of *Matrix* and was threatened with legal action. Twelve months later he is still making libellous comments.
4. During meetings of the BSFG he frequently interrupts guest speakers with inane comments.
5. Perhaps Steve is jealous of the Brum Group's success (it has been going 11 years), as he has complained himself about the lack of attendance at Solihull Group meetings.
6. Steve often asks group/committee members for help and information, and apparently gives only abuse in return.

If the *enfant terrible* of Birmingham fandom is unhappy about the programme offered by the BSFG (we have had four authors as speakers so far this year, and most of our membership do want a formal programme), he has two choices. He may either resign from the Group, or stand for election for a committee post next year. Perhaps he is afraid that the membership will recognise his immaturity and not vote for him.

If 'Life on Mars' is supposed to be a news column, then it should be accurate. *Matrix* should not encourage misinformation or should make it clear that these are fictional accounts, more suitable for *Focus*.

This is probably not news to you, Graham, especially as I see that Jim England had to correct some of Steve's statements in a previous *Matrix* on the last page of this issue. Obviously you have to print the material you are sent in good faith, but perhaps you should consider dispensing with the services of columnists who constantly damage the reputation of *Matrix*.

Yours, more in sorrow than in anger.

No, I wouldn't want to damage the reputation of *Matrix*, and, in fairness to Steve's reputation, could there be another side to the story? But then, that's the next editor's problem.

There were a number of others whom we also heard from; in addition to the entire Brum SF Group Committee, they included:

PATRICK RIGGS, who, in his first letter, praised Dave Langford's 'Life' and asked "could any kind soul send me a copy of their fanzine" (he'll promise to reply by return, with a free fanzine, if it's "really good"!).

JOHN FAIRWEATHER; KEN MANN; KEN MANN (again):- "Regarding Arnold Akien's article on the Eastercon Charter, he suggested the Charter could be endorsed by the BSFA. Does this mean a ballot on the Charter's validity is to be carried out or a rubber stamping by a possibly non-representative Council Committee? Moral pressure will only succeed if the document is based on: (a) common sense, (b) past experience, (c) simplicity, and (d) non-restriction of innovation, i.e., it must be flexible in attitude. As for the BSFA spring-clean, it's difficult to know where to start - the committee don't see fit to issue copies of the company rules to us, the shareholders."

DOROTHY DAVIES: "As an articulate person I chose the word 'rubbish' carefully, after discarding others more suited to the frame of mind I found myself in after reading it. A sheer waste of time, energy, paper, ribbon, postage, and your energies in printing it, and I've not thought that of anything else in-what-3 years? membership. No *Matrix* - more time for digging..... "

IAIN WRIGHT: "Can I be the first to write and say I hate the title *Space Habitat*"; yes, you can; and "the thought of seeing Simon Bostock or D. West in video brings me out in a cold sweat." Cool, very cool.

PHILIP COLLINS; GRAHAM ASHLEY; PHILL PROBERT; the REAL ALBACON COMMITTEE (see elsewhere); BRIGHTON BOROUGH COUNCIL; MAL ASHWORTH (reply pending); DAVE HICKS; POLICE CONSTABLE BLACK; NOEL HANNAN; and the 21st NORTHVALE SCOUT GROUP who wish to announce that "any jumble would be gratefully received" for their jumble sale on Friday 1st October, "Doors Open 6.30 PM".

Many salutations to all those who wrote to us over the last two years. We do not want to sign off with pleasantries and platitudes, but we will, because the articles and letters, and the correspondence and phone-calls with many fans provided us with much satisfaction and enjoyment - we hope this was reciprocated. There are many fans who contributed artwork and articles, and whilst it is slightly unfair to single out particular people, there are varied reasons why we'd like to publicly acknowledge the existence of D. WEST; SIMON OUNSLY; PETE LYON; DAVE LANGFORD; SIMON BOSTOCK; NIK MORTON; JOSEPH NICHOLAS; SANDY BROWN; and JOHN AND EVE HARVEY, whose patience at missed deadlines was close to angelic proportions and whose printing skills helped to make these past 13 issues slightly more comprehensible than they might otherwise have been. Thanks also to the BSFA mailing crew, without whom you'd have been spared Matrix. Now, there's a thought.....

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CONVENTION NEWS

The list of forthcoming conventions is not reprinted here since a full listing was given in the last *Space Habitat*; there are, however, some additional snippets of information:-

NOVACON 12: 5-7 November 1982 at the Royal Angus Hotel Birmingham. PR 2 now available - write for details, including hotel booking forms to Eunice Pearson at Apt 2, 1 Broughton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham 20.

RACON 2 has issued a further PR; the convention has over 100 members and is planned for 4-6 February 1983 in Edinburgh, with GoH Harry ("author of many books") Harrison and FGoH Pete (clean shaven)Lyon Register now while your car is still running - 4/7 New John's Place, Edinburgh.

THE OFFICIAL Committee of ALBACON II (British Eastercon, 1-4 April 1983, Central Hotel Glasgow) wish to advise as follows:

"In light of certain confusion caused by a former committee member we, the undersigned, wish to make our position quite clear.

1. We are the bulk of the Albacon II committee as presented at Channelcon. This may be checked against our Bid Report 2.
2. We hold both the bank accounts and all hotel bookings. The Central Hotel is ready for a good convention next Easter run by this committee.
3. We cannot accept any responsibility for any mail or monies sent to any address other than our official contact address. (This does not effect hotel bookings, which should still be sent directly to the hotel.)

Our address is: Albacon II, c/o B/L 8 Highburgh Road, Glasgow G12 9YU

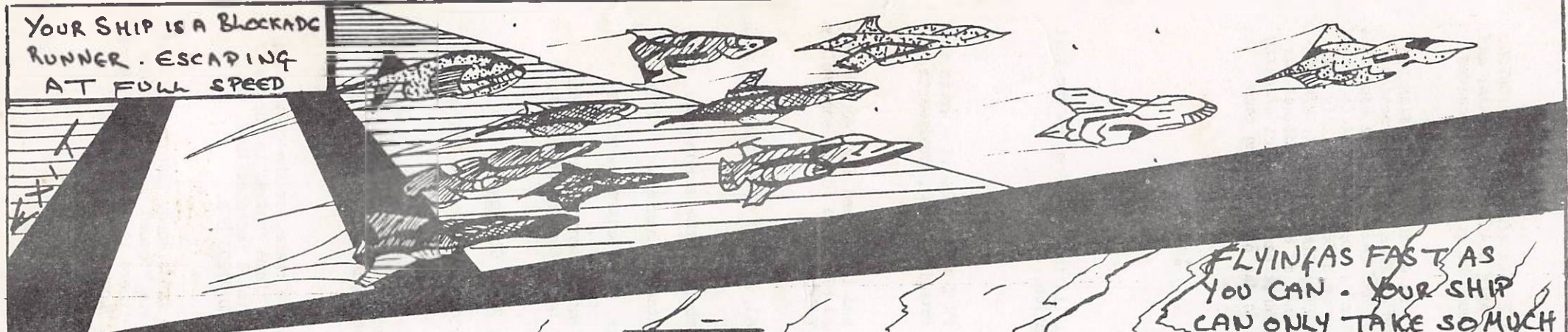
4. We all personally committed ourselves before Channelcon to run a good convention. We will not renege on that commitment."

The letter is signed by all of the committee members (save "the former committee member") and would appear to represent the Official Eastercon. The "former committee member" (Bob Shaw) refuses to accept their position, or so I understand. You must draw your own conclusions as to who does represent the "official" Eastercon Committee.

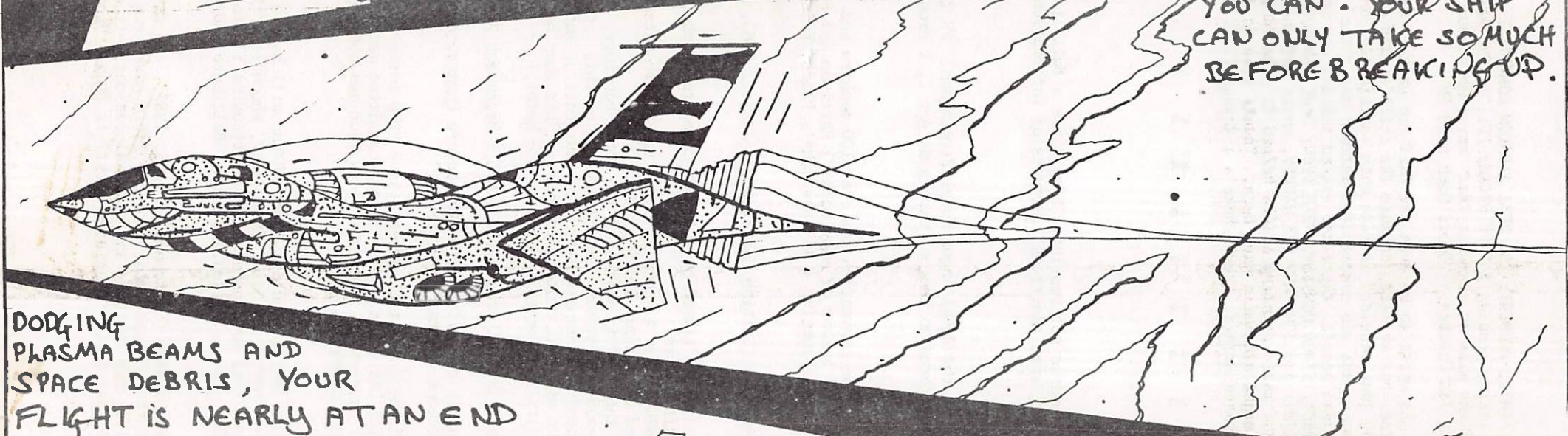
CONSTELLATION, the 1983 Worldcon, has issued its first PR and will have a theme for the convention: The Future in the Present: How Tomorrow is Built from Today, which is a theme central to the works of John Brunner, the GoH. Supporting membership is \$10; attending \$30 to 31 December 1982, and increasing after that. Details - Constellation, Box 1046, Baltimore, MD 21203 USA.

The Chairperson of the Con With No Name (September 17 & 18, 1983), c/o Leeds Road, Liversedge, West Yorkshire, wishes to point out that Messrs Wild, Cook and Field have been "forced to resign" from the convention committee, "solely for business and personal reasons" - there is no animosity suggested. They also wish to advise that their 'Confirmed Guest' is Dennis Spooner. So there!

YOUR SHIP IS A BLOCKADE
RUNNER. ESCAPING
AT FULL SPEED



FLYING AS FAST AS
YOU CAN. YOUR SHIP
CAN ONLY TAKE SO MUCH
BEFORE BREAKING UP.



DODGING
PLASMA BEAMS AND
SPACE DEBRIS, YOUR
FLIGHT IS NEARLY AT AN END



PAW 82

YOU ARE FINALLY HOME.
YOU HAVE SURVIVED

THE RUSH HOUR—
—THIS TIME