



**MAT
RIX
4
8**

SUMMER '83



Trials and tribulations again. This issue is typed in the Woodsley Road Centre for Garbage Studies, surrounded by the remains of dirty washing from BECCON and kitten-mangled fragments of fanzines. The bleary-eyed typist is now trying to remember if he posted the last lot of manuscript to 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, or to 43 Carshalton Road, Harrow. Memory will avail him not. The silence is broken only by the light banter of fleas playing a rowdy hand of bridge in the corner and the asthmatic gurgles of the ash-clogged typewriter. Whip me, beat me, any way you want me. My only duty is to fail. If anyone actually receives random bits of this issue, Cthulhu has smiled in his drowned citadel.

July/ August 1983

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EDITORIAL ADDRESS:
114 Woodsley Road, Leeds LS3,
In the Wicked North.



Printed in immaculate form by the Southern Counties Association for Ostpolitik and Dubious Artistry - Founding Parentalpersons Evanovitch and Johann Harvey, 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey, A Long Way From Yorkshire.

This edition dedicated to our two new kittens, Moron and Cretin, and to Joseph Nicholas - as we two raced blindly through the empty vaultings of that cyclopean insanity, through the echoing, vaporous, wormily-honeycombed depths of that cave-riddled, cube-barnacled horror, he was the first to recognise the eldritch mocking cry ' Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li! ' of fans searching for an open bar. The memory of his flight still haunts me now.

Oh, and as usual, all material copyright The British Science Fiction Association Ltd, with all rights and responsibilities reassigned to the contributors upon publication (i.e. nothing to do with the Editor, oh no!).

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This will ensure you further information on the BSFA and its activities. Sample mailings can be obtained for £1-50, the sum being deductible from the price of a full membership when you quite naturally take one out - DON'T YOU ?!

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"For all you have received, remember the suffering that bought you
this precious gift"

A1- Q'heimet (566-598)

" AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARGH!"

Simon Polley (1957-1942)

I should just like to add my seal of approval to this fantastic
magazine. I can truly say that I've never seen a publication
produced with more care and skill - by far the best printed
zine of this century. I know, Simon - you have this little
woman.....

Very Heeva (Too long ago - not
far enough away)

EDITORIAL

HELLO FOURTH REICH HERE WE COME!

Another selection of tape extracts from Matrix Secure Wing 48b.....

Rather too much to say and too little time to say it. A bigger Matrix this time, with at last a lengthy letter column, as I had originally intended. Time, I said, I've lots of time to get this one out - no problem. But.....all of a sudden, a break in the clouds of work which have hovered over me, and what happens? Type lots of Matrix? No, well, I actually fled the country and spent a few days in Paris getting smashed out of my head in little jazz dives - a glorious irresponsibility caused by Breton cider and cheap pastis. Afternoons at Les Halles in a burning sun, surrounded by African tribal dancers and stoned Rastas thundering out blood-rhythms, adopting my extremely white, extremely female companions. What hope for the blue-eyed boys, with the drums beating, the beads clacking and those polished bodies swaying in sun-worship?

Back to London, exhausted and dripping with the heat and DTs. Eggburgers and overdosing on caffeine. More, back to Leeds. Skin and brain peeling away in unison, my treacherous body. Who will rid me of this turbulent beast, this flesh of my flesh that carries the essential (?) grey slops in the brain-bucket? Lord, deliver us now from pleasure.

A quick scream of electoral depression. No excuse for the farce which was perpetrated under the facade of democracy this 9th June in the Year of Our Margaret 1983, was there? I mean, godammit, almost as many people stayed at home as voted for the Unmentionables. A mandate from the people. Ah, I see. Sorry to be so blind as not to recognise how Britain rose in its hour of need and gave Her overwhelming support, like..er..less than a third of the electorate. Hmmm.

But the issue, the issue. This time, reviews. At last a good response from people wishing to get involved in media reviewing, and thanks to all who sent stuff in. More, please, much more. I don't get to many films, I haven't a television - dreadful little animals - so it's mostly new to me, and when time is short I often end up deciding to see a film on the basis of someone's review. Usually, I just go and see the same films again and again. Apocalypse Now, 101 Dalmatians, Kagemusha - three of the best films ever printed on my retinas. Doubt me not. After the 6th or 7th time you can tell your dubious companion to watch out for the little man with the hat on just in the doorway because any minute now he's going to pick his nose and scratch his left ankle. Oh, they say. Is that important? they say. Well, after the 6th or 7th time, yes, of course it's important - by that time you certainly don't want to have to follow the plot! I mean, he must be there for some deeply significant reason. Considering what it costs to make a film nowadays, I can't believe anyone is paid for picking his nose without a damn good reason.

This was going to be a jolly interesting editorial on the importance of actually liking SF, but it isn't. Waves of guilt wash over me (what a rotten phrase) as I realise how easily I've fallen into an elite-style condemnation of the genre I love, turned my face from books which moved me profoundly because it's not quite said. How I've hedged my bets and talked obscurely about 'alternative writing forms' and 'speculative exploration in literature' rather than saying something was SF. O traitorous son, unfaithful spouse! This coward's way I here abjure. I thrilled to Edgar Rice Burroughs, I orgasmed to Dune and I cried over A Scanner Darkly. I was steeped in the stuff, drowned at birth in it.....well, I've said it now. Next month, an in-depth literary analysis of the metaphorical complexity of My Favourite Martian. Now forget all this and read the zine, d'accord?

NEWS and views

And so, just for those who might not have heard, a quick mention of the Ansible Fan Poll. Terribly fannish stuff, but quite interesting. Not to worry, this won't take long. The best British fanzine was decisively Tappen, produced by Gollancz mole Malcolm Edwards, with Leeds Export Award winner Still it Moves, from Simon Ounsley, coming second. The best British fanwriter was judged to be no less than Dave Langford, the editor of Ansible, which just goes to show that my faith in poll-rigging need not be cast aside, while Master of the Astral Limbo, Diogenes West, took second place. Best British fanartist was the perpetrator of this issue's delicate cover, Pyotr Lyon, with Rob Hansen coming second. The most super, triffid single issue was considered to be Tappen 5, and Jimmy Robertson's Felicity took second place, while the best Article/ Column was undoubtedly 'Performance', sired by D. West out of Tappen - Nick Lowe's 'Desert Island Lavatories' from the infamous Palmerzine Chocolates of Lust came second. The best Fanzine cover was judged to be Pete Lyon's cover for Tappen 5, holding equal merit with John McFarlane's cover for Indian Scout. The Worst Thing of 1982/3 was finally decided as the Fake Bob Shaw, for a multitude of reasons, although everyone in Leeds knows who should have won this: Langford entered into urgent diplomacy at the last second and refused to be a cad, shame on him.

For them as hain't yet 'eard again, mayhap a rundown on some other awards might be in order. First of all, the Nebula winners:

Best Novel: No Enemy But Time by Michael Bishop.
Best Novella: Another Orphan by John Kessel.
Best Novelette: Fire Watch by Connie Willis.
Best Short Story: A Letter From the Clearys by Connie Willis.

And then, the Locus award winners:

Best Novel: Foundation's Edge by Isaac I'll-do-anything-for-a-fat-cheque.
Best Fantasy Novel: The Sword of the Lictor by Gene Wolfe.
Best First Novel: Courtship Rite by Donald Kingsbury.
Best Novella: Souls by Joanna Russ.
Best Novelette: Djinn, No Chaser by Harlan Ellison.
Best Short Story: Sur by Ursula le Guin.
Best Anthology: The Best SF of the Year-11 edited by Terry Carr.
Best Single Author Collection: The Compass Rose by Ursula le Guin.
Best Non-Fiction: The Engines of the Night by Barry Malzberg.
Best Artist: Michael Whelan.
Best Magazine: Locus ((what a coincidence!))
Best Publisher: Pocket/Timescape.

Lots of book news flying around. Dear to my own heart, it emerges that the Puffin Fantasy Gamebooks are really romping away with the top positions in the children's book charts - the fourth and fifth books are due out at the end of September, and will be Starship Traveller and City of Thieves, by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone respectively. The first three titles have sold over 300,000 copies and have been widely acclaimed. Having tried them, I can recommend that they are good basic fun for a few hours, and certainly worth a quick look. The books have nice drawings scattered through the text.

THE WARLOCK OF
FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
THE CITADEL
OF CHAOS
THE FOREST
OF DOOM

From the associated imprints of the majestic Penguin empire, we can expect a number of SFy items over the next couple of months. It is worth noting that according to a recent survey, Penguin was still the paperback imprint recognised by the greatest number of people and still retains a respectable name amongst professionals and 'laypeople' (whoever they are), above other pb houses still in the running. Martin Gardner has written Science Fiction Puzzle Tales for them, 36 brainteasers originally published in Asimov's notorious magazine. This is coming out at the end of July for a mere £2-95, while at the same time immensely famous Malcolm Edwards should see the publication of his Constellations, a collection of SF stories ' destined for far wider appeal than just SF addicts ' so I am informed. The blurb says '...holding a telescope to the future ' but doesn't unfortunately say which end we are supposed to be looking down. I shall investigate accordingly. Also due - Prisoners of Power by the Flying Strugatskies will be issued as a follow-up to the impressive Roadside Picnic (the basis for Tarkovsky's film Stalker) at £1-95. King Penguin offer Levitation, which looks into the lives of people who create surrogate worlds of obsession and delusion to avoid the real world - possibly the first book about BSFA members to be published. Coming in October we have Dr. Who - The Making of a TV Series, which I had hoped would be about a new Dr. Who who dresses up in evening gowns but which turns out to be the more average interpretation, and two adult magic fantasy books - The Basic Spell Book and Hills of Gandradesh by Steve Jackson. The terminology ' adult ' usually means bigger tits and less believable magic than ' children's fantasy ' I'm afraid, but Jackson has a better reputation than that, so I'll look out for them. You might have already noticed that Penguin have now produced all three Titus books in one bumper volume at £5-95, incidentally. Yet more - Margames, a film tie-in about a computer whizz-kid who taps into ' Joshua ', the USAF Command Centre Computer and starts a game he might not be able to finish. The film is out on 18th August in the capital and 9 weeks later in the poor whinging provinces who don't know a good film anyway even if they do get a chance to look at it, do they? The book comes out in either Penguin at £1-75 or Puffin Plus at £1-50, which gives you a chance to buy it twice by accident if you're lucky. Just one more from the Empire - The Neverending Story by Michael Ende. This is translated from the German and is about a world called Fantasia and some pudgy hero, which is all I know. It's hb at £8-95 and will have drawings throughout and a TWO COLOUR text! Red and green, published by the hardback wing Allen Lane.

Century swing into action with The Horse Lord by Peter Morwood - the struggle of Aldric against the sorcerer Kalarr cu Ruruc, a sort of Celtic myth reworked as far as I can tell. To match that, The Way of Wyrd, a fascinating-sounding book documenting the passage of a scribe through 7th century England on a journey into the spirit world to reclaim his soul; based on research and studies in shamanism and sorcery, I think this might be worth a glance too. I'm a bit wary about this next one - The Belgariad, a fantasy series in five books. The first two are Pawn of Prophecy and Queen of Sorcery. I bet you'd be shocked if I told you that they're being compared to Tolkien and Donaldson, huh? Yawn. More info to follow.

Allen & Unwin are ploughing away with Tolkien, by the way, putting out a new work The Book of Lost Tales in what might be a few volumes. Book One is out in hardback in October at £12-50, claims to be edited yet again by Chris Tolkien, though I wonder how much he must have to be writing himself nowadays. No doubt editing your father's list of underwear to take on holiday and his shopping lists must get a bit tedious after a while, and even A & U supremos must be wondering how long the defunct golden goose can keep laying. This work contains tales of Valinor with commentaries and vocabularies begun in 1916/17.

On a more healthy note, A & U's Unicorn imprint is filling up, with Maxim Jakubowski's Lands of Never Book One out in August, along with Geraldine Harris - Prince of the Godborn. Again, the start of a series - does no-one write single books anymore? - called the Seven Citadels series. The Observer

has called the first book ' a book of exceptional quality in its genre ' - it is apparently about a quest for seven keys from seven sorcerers to free an imprisoned saviour. Gosh. Supposed to be a four book saga, by the by (I've heard that before!). Unicorn are republishing The Silver Stallion by James Branch Cabell, a witty and unusual book which is part of a trilogy first published years ago. For the arties, there is yet again a Tolkien Calendar - not, as we all suspected, a collection of his jottings in margins during lectures, but works by Roger Garland based on IOR, the Sellamillion and Bits My Dad Would Have Liked To Have Remain Undiscovered. Other goodies - Joy Chant 's When Voiha Wakes and then The High Kings, a selection of pre-Arthurian myths with full-colour illustrations by G. Sharp. In October, Here be Dragons by Ralph Whitlock - this traces the remains and traditions of dragons in the UK, with their lore, their relationship to the Church and the various folk-tales. Looks fascinating. That's 26-95, in hardback.

Black Swan, a Corgi imprint, are bringing out a reprint of Fata Morgana, a bizarre fantasy/ fable by Kotzwinkle, who is unfortunately now more famous for his novelisation of ET than for his weird works of earlier years.

Granah offer 2010: Odyssey 2 (need more be said?); Christopher Evans has another book published under the pseudonym of Eve Christopher - Soul Sister; Futura are bringing out four novellas by Stephen King - Different Seasons, and of course, this autumn we will see the paperback version of Gene Wolfe's Citadel of the Autarch from Arrow. I understand that although this is the last in this little group concerning Severian the Torturer there may be another book somehow related to this particular fictional world of Urth.

Not much else of great note in the book world - The Drowned World by Ballard is being reissued in the Everyman Fiction series, along with a new book by Rachel Ingalls called Mrs. Caliban and others, which is a collection of three strange novellas of fantasy and legend. Previously mentioned, Emma Tennant's Queen of Stones from Picador has been described by the Times as ' a compulsively readable work of the imagination' and by the Literary Review as ' a delicate interweaving of Hansel and Gretel, Goldilocks and Good Queen Bess '. I wish I knew what that means. Flamingo books are bringing out an anthology by Michael Moorcock which will be the best of contributions to New Worlds, although I question whether this is really needed.

On other fronts, I have just seen a copy of Imagine, the role-playing, fantasy magazine from the Cambridge branch of the Gary Gygax empire. The interior illos are pretty shoddy in most places and it seems to be an inferior version of White Dwarf, which has been the UK role-playing mag for some time now. Some of us were amused to see that whilst heroic Dave Langford does the reviews of sf matters in White Dwarf, Imagine has managed to capture famous Ballardian Dave Pringle to do their equivalent. Which of these two mighty unstoppable forces will win the day? Imagine should soon have some fiction running - rumoured is an Ian Watson opus, and I am told the artwork should improve with a few issues. We shall see.....

Brief snippets... A recent SCAN report (Yorkshire and Tyne Tees TV Link) has produced an analysis of paperback sales and readers, but did not bother to separate out SF unfortunately. Thrillers came out as the most popular type of paperback purchased with a third of all purchases being of that genre.

Activities for Writers

Two notices came to us in the last few weeks - one was to say that Ian Watson has been asked to run a one-day SF course in the Autumn. It is Writing Science Fiction, and is at Towcester Adult Education Centre, Sponne School, Towcester, Northants. on Saturday 8th October, 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. The course fee is £3-60. Enrolments at the same address on Wednesday 14th September at 7.30 pm. For more details phone Towcester 51777. The other I will let speak for itself - see over.....

INFORMATION SHEET

AIMS

The aims of CASSANDRA are to encourage the production of original works of science fiction, and to promote the subject on a more adult level than has been done by other groups in the past.

In recent years, the subject of science fiction in both book form and the cinema has been saddled with a reputation for being both juvenile and trivial, not worthy of consideration as good literature or film. CASSANDRA was established for two main reasons:

We wish to select the good, literate material from the mass of pulp which is produced and promote this aspect of the work. By doing this, we hope to raise people's expectations and standards and see science fiction regarded as good quality literature in it's own right and not as a literary pariah.

We would like to see people create their own work in the field of short story writing, novels, poetry, radio scripts, drama presentations, film making, critical essays, book and film reviews and the production of good quality science fiction art. There are many people around who do have good and original ideas but lack the stimulus of group activity and the chance to have their work produced and read or performed. We are always prepared to help and encourage anyone, regardless of age, in these activities.

Because CASSANDRA has no wish to become an introverted club, we do our best to establish links with other groups and organisations in the town and outside. These could be either relevant groups such as theatre groups, writer's circles, art clubs etc or we could contact schools and colleges in order to promote activities in the direction of science fiction (eg literary competitions and art exhibitions).

Eventually, it is hoped that people will realise that they are all capable of producing ideas, and that all speculation on the future and other numerous areas that are encompassed by the subject of science fiction is valid and worth putting forward. In effect, the subject and the ideas and possibilities that it is able to put forward belong to everyone, and not simply publishers and commercial distributors.

Contact

Stephen Austin, 43, Talbot Rd, Northampton Tel.30703

Bernard Smith, 8, Wansford Walk, Thorplands Brook,
Northampton Tel.29622 Ext 3460 (Day)



MEMBERS NOTICEBOARD

ANSIBLE, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE RG1 5AU

Gutter Press Baron wishes to meet new BSFA fanzine reviewer prepared to be as fulsome over low scandal-sheet as former incumbent Martyn Taylor. Applications to the above address. No experience of future of military technology necessary.

DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU

Starving author wishes to flog rare copies of War in 2080: The future of military technology, rescued at colossal expense from the toils of remainder merchants. Westbridge 1979 hardback 1st edition, 229pp, signed (if you like) and with update sheet, formerly retailing at £6-50, yours for a mere £3-00 post free from above address. Hurry! Hurry! Only huge piles left!

DOROTHY DAVIES, 3 CADELS ROW, FARINGDON, OXON.

Or'bit n. (Astron) path traced by one heavenly body in its revolution around another: therefore:

Orbiter - that which is doing the orbiting.

Am I right?

Do some orbiting with Orbiter. Lonely writers need consolation and praise from other lonely writers, burning midnight oil and wasting reams of lovely clean paper working out intricate stories. Contact the above as soon as possible.

P. HOLDSWORTH, 6 RUSKIN GROVE, DEIGHTON, HUDDERSFIELD, YORKSHIRE HD2 1HR

AD ASTRA: Complete run (issue 1 to 16), all in good condition. Any reasonable offer accepted. Write, or phone Huddersfield 513504.

LANGFORD, DAVE, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE RG1 5AU

Effete pseudo-intellectual wishes to boost skiffy pretensions by acquiring a copy of Foundation: The Review of SF, 3rd number only. Money paid - - or would exchange for rare text on future of military technology. Don't all rush at once, now.

NIGEL ROBERTS, GAHRENBERGSTRASSE 13c, D-3500 KASSEL, GERMANY

I am looking for people to exchange correspondence with. There are no preset criteria. I'll talk to anyone, although ladies are especially welcome. I'm not very fannish, so superfans are likely to receive a friendly but bemused reply. I am in temporary exile here until the end of the year - have pity!

CONVENTION NEWS

More exotic things to do over the next few months....

BECCON has been and gone, and a pretty enjoyable convention it was too. Your humble editor spent some time promoting Anglo-american relationships and the rest of the time in an alcoholic daze, a condition not totally uncommon. Let us peer into the murky depths for further excitement...

The end of August brings us 2 conventions in close succession - first of all, as you should well know, SILICON at the Grosvenor Hotel, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I am told that there has been a management change, but that the new lords are still sympathetic to furry fandom. All should be well. From 2nd September to the 4th, we have UNICON 4, where there have been some major upheavals. John Sladek has had to zoom back to the States, so Ian Watson replaces him as GoH. Malheureusement, Angela Carter will be unable to attend now, but Ken Slater and Garry Kilworth are still on the books. A warning comes that rooms should be booked before 26th August if possible. Try contacting Alex Stewart, 11A Bæwley Road, Colchester, Essex, or Susan Francis, 17 Laing Road, Colchester, Essex.

The next convention worthy of note after this will be INVENTION, held at the Glasgow Central Hotel 23rd to 25th September, with GoH Chris Boyce and fan GoH Jim Barker. Details from V.J. Docherty, 20 Hillington Gardens, Cardonald, Glasgow G25. And then....yes, it's NOVACON !!!

NOVACON 13 will be held at the usual Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham, from 4th to 6th November. This promises to be a pretty big event, with lots of new talent and energy going into the con. Films will include Altered States (which I first saw on the Dover-Calais ferry in one of the roughest crossings I have ever had - try looking at the psychedelic effects when the ferry is pitching wildly, the lights flickering and your stomach crawling back to Leeds without the rest of you!) An American Werewolf in London and Love at First Bite. GoH is Lisa Tuttle, and there will be a ' Not the Fan Room' organised by famous Steve Green, giving an interesting programme alternatif. Hotel Bookings are being organised by Chris Donaldson, 46 Colwyn Road, Beeston, Leeds, Yorks. Registration is £7-00 attending, £3-50 supporting from the same address, and I must say that it looks as if this NOVACON might have a lot of things going for it. Worth a look.

Short of room now. Also coming, CYMRUCON 3 - Contact Helen McNab, The Bower, High Street, Llantwit Major, South Glamorgan - Membership is £9-00, con to be held in Cardiff, 26th-27th November. Dez Skinn and the Warrior gang are Comic GoHs, with John Brunner, Dougal Dixon and Dave Langford.

Finally, 2 1984 conventions. OXCON 84, over August Bank Holiday 1984, with GoH Brian Aldiss. £8-00 membership from M.S. Porter, 28 Asquith Road, Rose Hill, Oxford. And, notwithstanding, etc. the mighty SEACON. Overleaf see the official press release , below see candid informal view of GoH caught in a quiet moment by roving penster Dolores West. Where else will you be able to meet Lithuanian sub-editors against Cruise who are planning their all-hermaphrodite APA with only Zambian contributions and a one-parent mailing secretary from Helsinki? Where else will you be able to apply to John Brunner in 3 languages for the chance to hold a room party without free beatings and sensory deprivation as once practiced by the eager staff? Hurry, hurry, hurry!

You might as well go, really, even if it's just to hear the YORCON 3 bid being launched officially...



COMING AT SEACON:

FARMER PRIEST

SEACON 84

Apr 20 — 23
BRIGHTON

GUESTS of HONOUR:

FARMER PRIEST
NESVADBA KUMMING BARBET

Not signed up for SEACON yet then? Not captivated by the lure of sunny Brighton?

All right then. Since you're obviously immune to this sort of thing, it's scarcely worth me mentioning that SEACON will, of course, be the major science fiction event of 1984, with five interesting guests of honour (including a new improved American one), dozens of other writers in attendance (like Brian Aldiss, Fredrick Pohl, Bob Shaw and Gene Wolfe) major films, a play, a large art show with lots of European work on display, an equally vast book room where you can buy all those volumes you've been searching out for the last few years, seven simultaneous programmes (including computer and childrens' programmes), a continuous video show, fancy dress, fireworks etc etc....

After all, you've no doubt heard all this before and perhaps you think SEACON will be too expensive in any case. Perhaps a few facts will convince you otherwise....

.....like the registration fee of only £7 (till the end of November) which is less than that for ALBACON 2. £16-20 a night at the Metropole (including English breakfast) doesn't sound too bad if you say it quickly and after all if you can forego the lavish luxury of the Met itself there are dozens of cheaper hotels just a stone's throw away round the corner (you may have stayed at one of these for SEACON 79). As the cost of alcohol forms a large proportion of con expenditure for many fans, the prospect of 70p a pint for a choice of four real ales (including Courage Directors bitter) must be one of the most attractive offers made by a con in the last decade or two. And if you prefer more solid nourishment, don't forget that a street full of restaurants of every nationality is only five minutes walk away from the hotel.

Add to all this breakfast served till eleven o'clock, the hotel porters' assurance that they'll put away their jackboots and smile occasionally, and a cosy fan room with its own bar hosted by cuddly Ian Williams, then we reckon that the Metropole begins to sound like a distinctly friendly proposition. And to cap it all, SEACON is the only con in 1984 which has a written assurance from Isaac Asimov that he won't be attending. What could be more fannish than that?

Besides which, Easter at home would be a bit dull, wouldn't it? Sign up now and don't miss out on the fun.....

Registrations from:
Pauline Morgan, 321 Sarehole Street, Hall Green, BIRMINGHAM B28 0AL (£7-00)



THE RETURN OF THE JEDI (Star Wars VI)

Reviewed by Martyn Taylor

Director : David Marquand

I had intended to review Return of the Jedi . Then I saw the movie and realised that nothing I could write would make any difference to your going to see it (you already have or you never will) or what you would make of it. So, I decided not to write a review of Return of the Jedi (or Star Wars Episode VI as it is archly and ominously called by the makers). However, those at the back can stop cheering because I am still going to write about it, eschewing my customary ' auditioning for Cahiers du Cinema ' stance (I expect that C du C would hate this movie for much the same reasons as the literary slobs...er,..snobs... will hate it). The fact is that this series of movies sets out to be nothing more than a remake of the 1940's Republic serials, made for the video age. As such, it is heavy-handed on the local colour, tableau visuals, computer enhanced images, and action - whatever else always action! - while being light on the traditionally 'finer' elements of story telling, such as character, plot and dialogue. Never mind the ball, get on with the game! This movie is not art. It is carefully contrived hokum in the tradition of Barnum and Bailey. It is Robin Hood in an alien forest. It is a heads-down, no nonsense three chord thrash. The question for the critic is not whether it provides any insight into the human condition but whether it succeeds in its intent of entertaining you for the length of time your bum is in that seat.

Does Return of the Jedi succeed? Well, hell, don't ask me, go and ask Lucasfilm's accountant (he won't give you any answer worth a string of beads, but if he's just phoning Colombia then you know what sort of business it is doing). Go and count how many are queuing up to see the film for the 2nd, 3rd, Nth time.

Of course, the movie is absurd. By the criteria against which the good and the great are measured this is vulgar in its commerciality and relentlessly banal artifice. So the stormtroopers are gullible fools who cannot shoot straight. So the quasi-mentat Luke can make C3PO dance in the air but has to look at his sabre just when the Emperor happens to be looking too. So the said Emperor can give Luke a terminal case of St.Vitus' dance but cannot defend himself when Vader decides to drop him down the tube. So the script girl left two references to the Forest Moon of Endor in the same sentence AND forgot to tell the Emperor, who went right on calling it the Century Moon. So the rebel shuttle managed to get lost while under close monitoring by the big baddie himself; so the list could be endless, so what? This is Peanuts, not Norman Mailer before he forgot how to write. This is a comedy, and even classic comedy requires the audience to accept some pretty absurd plot propositions.....

What was that? You say that this movie is an adventure....Look my friends, any movie in which the Wookiee looks normal and has hang-gliding homicidal teddy bears just has to be a comedy! Which brings us to the heart, the strength of this movie. Return of the Jedi is a full-blooded menagerie of a movie, the muppets gone mad, and if that is the dramatic easy option ther is no doubt that the intended audience loved them, from the proto-sandworm Jabba the Hutt to those aforementioned homicidal teddy bears (if George Lucas has not read The Earthmen's Burden I should be very, very surprised!). Whatever criticism can be levelled at some of the effects - the flying mattes over sand were particularly poor, by the standards set by Lucasfilm - the puppetry was excellent, far outstripping the achievements of the human actors (with the exception of Carrie Fisher who still doesn't act but does look very good - in some scenes at least!). There is just one exception to that - the Emperor. This gloriously pantomime villain,with the looks and diction of a 500 year-old John Betjeman suffering from piles, is a wonder to behold. No puffed-up little princeling, he looks like the real thing, a galactic emperor - evil like Klaus Kinski playing Peter Kurten in a remake of H - a twenty four carat nasty with a heart of the purest lead. Beside him Darth Vader is a real cutie. Mind you, the script has transformed Vader into a real real cutie. Foul, I say. Give us back our villains! It would have been a real joy to see this blask masked nemesis put

us out of our misery in having to watch that insufferable, holier than thou or anyone else pain in the bum brat of his. I mean, the guy ain't no fun anymore. Someone should tell him that knights aren't meant to enjoy those all night vigils in the chapel and the mortifications with birch twigs:

You may have guessed that this movie isn't in my all time top ten, which isn't to say that it doesn't achieve what it sets out to do - entertain in true comic book style. Maybe I would have liked just a smidgeon of plot, you know, here and there, but I'm just old-fashioned. The Star Wars trilogy has given me a lot of fun, and I just hopes that Lucas accepts he has squeezed all the juice out of this format and goes on to something else, like a galaxy not so far away. There are moments when Return of the Jedi comes perilously close to the mannered, knowing parody which is the hallmark of the Bond movies - Harrison Ford outdoes Roger Moore with his " I can't really believe I'm getting paid for this" look - and I would suggest that this is the last avenue Star Wars ought to take. Bond is fairy stories for grown ups, whereas Star Wars is reformed legends for kids and, as such, just has to be played for real. To do otherwise would be to patronise the audience, and no film-maker has the right to do that.

As I say, this is one for the kids - simple, innocent fun, splendid, cruel, colourful and very, very silly.

THE BRONX WARRIORS

Review by Philip Collins

Directed by Enzo Castellari

The setting is the near future. The government has declared the Bronx a nomans land. Motorbike gangs and various thugs have taken over the area. Somehow, someone from the outside, a corporation heiress, has got into the Bronx. She must be brought back, and there is only one man for the job!

Does this seem familiar at all? If it does, you've probably seen John Carpenter's film Escape From New York, which this cheapo Italian movie rips off mercilessly. The main difference between the films is that in this version, we see it from the point of view of the villains, not the authorities. The lead character, Trash (leader of one of the motorcycle gangs) is played by Mark Gregory, and he strongly resembles - surprise - the star of ERMY, Kurt Russell. They sport similar leather waistcoats showing of acres of bronzed biceps, and both have the same shoulder-length hair. Here, the difference is that Gregory manages the seemingly impossible task of showing even less acting ability than Russell.

Mind you, the actors are handicapped by having to spout the most atrocious dialogue, heavily sprinkled with swear words. When your ears aren't being blasted with obscenities your eyes are pummelled with sickening scenes of stabbings, decapitations and general gore, lovingly photographed in close-up ((Sounds like my sort of film)) for maximum nausea.

This is the sort of film that makes the prospect of staying home and watching Coronation Street seem highly rewarding.

ANDROID (15)

Review by Mark Tudor

Directed by Aaron Lipstadt

Despite having the usual hackneyed cliches - Mad Scientist (Klaus Kinski), Faithful But Dumb Assistant (brilliantly portrayed by Don Opper, who co-wrote the film with James Reigle) and Delectable Damsel in Distress (Brie Howard) - this is one of those few (Oh, so few) low budget SF thrillers which, like Carpenter's Dark Star, proves that it's not mandatory to spend a fortune making a genre film...all that is needed is genuine talent and skill. Lipstadt has no lack of either, and this, his debut as a director, is as impressive as was Carpe

In a remote space station Dr. Daniel (the Mad Scientist) is attempting to create

the perfect android with the help of his assistant, a far from perfect android of the 404 series - Max. As the film opens, Dr. Daniel has been informed that the " Company " is no longer willing to finance his illegal research. Quite naturally Daniel is most upset at this, especially as he is now so close to success - all he needs to animate his creation, Cassandra, is the ' life essence' of a real woman (okay, so it's not a perfect plot!) .

At this point three convicts arrive on the scene at the space station, having hijacked their police transport - Keller (Norbert Weisser), Mendes (Crofton Hardester) and the lovely Maggie (our Damsel in Distress) .

Keller, a clever but weak terrorist, quickly realises that Max is an android and wants to get him back to Earth where being illegal he will be worth a small fortune. However, he runs into opposition from the ultra macho murderer Mendes who wants to repair the damaged transport, kill Max and Daniel and make good their escape. Maggie, meanwhile, tired of playing her two companions off against each other, and not realising that Max is an android, has fallen for the simple, gentle and childlike chap. Max, having never seen a woman before (except in Stewart Grainger movies) is confused but fascinated by Maggie. Dr. Daniel has his own plans for her, of course.....

On this basic rather cliched plot Lipstadt builds a magnificent film, creating real personal terror and tension by combining concise action with superbly drawn character studies - the personalities interact around the events and Max 404 becomes gradually more humanised through contact with Maggie..

Don Oppers performance as Max is a delight, complemented as it is by some lovely touches - Max in the control room at a crucial moment in the story watching Metropolis, or at another time listening to "It's a man's, man's, man's world" as he comes to a decision about his future. It's impossible not to love this character with his naive, childish nature - on discovering that Daniel intends to terminate him once Cassandra is activated, he responds by mis-setting the dining table (ball bearings instead of wine etc.) and packs his bags to run away (spare eyes, fingers, spare arm....). There's no doubt that one Max is worth a dozen ETs or R2 D2s!

Quite simply, this film is one of the most enjoyable I've seen in ages, quite reminiscent of Alien with its tantalising glimpses of a real world just outside the scope of the cameras - very nice special effects, excellent acting and superb direction : don't miss it!

" We brought back rocks. "

Review and comments by David V. Barrett.

PERFECT SHADOWS

By Derek Lister, BBC2, 6th May 1983

One day in April I walked around the National Aeronautical and Space Museum in Washington D.C.

It left me cold.

The Mercurys, Geminis, Apollos, Lunar Landing Modules, all looked as if they'd been put together by an intelligent, space-mad 12 year old, out of a few Meccano sets. The main thing that got me was how tiny, how really, really small the capsules were. And how tatty.

I was amazingly unimpressed.

On my way out I saw a display stand, with the standard armed guard standing over it. I couldn't see what was being displayed at first. Then I looked more closely.

A small, black, polished piece of rock, no bigger than my fingernail. A sign invited me to 'touch a piece of genuine Moon rock '. Being a foreigner, and nervous of armed guards, I asked if I might do so.

" Sure, go ahead," he smiled. " Dummy tourist," he thought.

That night, I happened to look up at the moon, just hanging there. Someone walked up there, I thought. Some guy chipped off a bit of that moon, and I touched it this afternoon. The smallest, and surely the most expensive exhibit in the whole damn place, and it came from that yellow disk I'm staring up at.

Then I was - no, not so much impressed; it was a bit more metaphysical than that...

The same conflict of emotions was examined in Perfect Shadows. Chuck Miller has walked on the moon. Now he's come back to Earth, in more ways than one; he has to do 'stupid lectures and stupid ass-hole jobs at NASA. My God, if I'd known it was going to be like this I'd have stayed on the goddam Moon.' He has become an ambassador for the Moon, a custodian of the American dream, one who has reached out into space; - but all his listeners want to hear about is 'the hardware...and how we pi sed our pants.'

'At one point in time,' Chuck says, 'it really was possible to believe in "a giant leap for mankind"...now it's become naive...When I see spacecraft going up loaded with military hardware I get the terrible feeling we've thrown it all away.' But when he tells his NASA superior officer that he wants out, he gets the reaction: 'You do anything to embarrass the Administration, and I'll have your ass, you hero...People want heroes, not goddamned humility.'

And this is the problem. Chuck is not a PR man; he has no desire to spend the rest of his life extolling NASA and the US of A to small town women's meetings. He doesn't quite know just what it is he DOES want, but he wants to be left alone for long enough to come to terms with the fact of what he has done, where he has been, and how it is going to affect him. However, his family, instead of giving him the psychological support he needs while he sorts himself out, are also demanding that he be a hero, and at the same time a husband and a father. His obnoxious teenage daughter screams obscenities at him while demanding his love and attention; his wife chooses this time to come out with the classic 'You never did love me' type of lines.

Chuck is incomplete, he is inadequate perhaps. But his whole conception of reality, his whole perception of the universe, has been upended: he thinks of 'a handshake in space...but one hand in space can blot out the whole Earth.'

Perfect Shadows was based on the problems encountered by a number of astronauts on their return to Earth; many of them have been psychologically disturbed, some have suffered nervous breakdowns, several have quit NASA, one (God help us) may be standing for President next year. As a play it was confused in parts, much of the dialogue (and the acting) was stilted and repetitive, there was no clear storyline, and it wasn't explicit about the conflicts in Chuck's mind, or just what it was that was bothering him. That sentence may say that it was a bad play, but it was a damn good documentary - real people, life, conversation, are confused, stilted, negative, unclear.

Perhaps the problem is that NASA expect their astronauts to continue to be what they were trained to be: astronauts - they are expected to abnegate their humanity and become automata. But unfortunately for NASA, astronauts are people, and experiences change people; as Captain Kamp says to the Kid in Samuel Delany's Dhalgren, 'Look - I'm not the same person I was before I went to the moon.' (p512)

So, we spend millions of dollars on high technology, research and development, in getting men to the moon. 'And,' in Chuck's words, 'in return we brought back rocks....we brought back...rocks.'

'I stood on the Moon....and what have we got to show for it? - goddam rocks.'

((Don't forget , Mesdames et Messieurs, all reviews - film, TV, radio, theatre or music - are gratefully received, so break out those dam' quills and get scratching, y'all hear!))

THE MATRIX EXCLUSIVE EXPOSE FEATURE

INTERZONE - THE TRUTH AT LAST.....BY Simon Ounsley

Simon Polley said that I could write something about INTERZONE for MATRIX if I liked, "But it'll have to be the truth" he said, "none of the usual rubbish about how INTERZONE is the greatest thing since sliced Isaac Asimov..."

"But that is the truth, Simon..."

"I don't want the hard sell. I want to know what it's really like being involved with INTERZONE. I want the facts".

"Since when has MATRIX been interested in facts?" I reply, but Simon just gives me a dirty look and implies that I better co-operate or I'll get pushed out by a media review or the latest scandal from Birmingham or something. Worse - perhaps he'll get D West to satirise us in a cartoon or Joseph Nicholas to write in support of us or something equally catastrophic. I'd better do what he says.

But what exactly is the reality? Glancing round the front room here at INTERZONE HQ (Northern), I notice the final batch of copies of issue four all ready in their smart little envelopes and eager to embark upon the final stage of their epic journey all the way from tree or imagination (depending on whether you're talking about the pages or the stuff that's written on them) and into your homes and eyes and minds. All they want is for me to take them down to the sorting office and post them off. And then there's the blue book over there with all our financial information in it: invoices and receipts and calculations on the backs of envelopes, all in the process of being translated into "INTERZONE Accounts 1982-83" and part of the way along the road to being ordered and sorted and neatly typed out. But not quite there yet - just waiting for me to get round to it. And there's a small pile of manuscripts over there under the TV; I must get round to reading them and dispatching them back with a few well chosen words of constructive rejection, or - more pleausrably - sending a mildly optimistic holding letter while I hawk the story round the other five editors. And then there's the housework to do and the car to clean and wasn't I going to do a fanzine? Oh yes, and Monday to Friday I have to go out and earn myself a living.

A certain competitor of ours has an office in the West End; INTERZONE's northern office is underneath the TV and over there against the wall beside the settee.

This, I suppose, is what Simon means by the reality behind INTERZONE: the fact that its editors have to fit it in between washing the dishes and feeding the cat - that we can only afford to produce the magazine because we don't make anything out of it and shoulder some of the expenses ourselves. No doubt this makes us all sound very noble but of course we're in it for the power and the prestige - to bathe in the reflected glory of those talented souls who send us good stories. Oh yes, and we do it for the worry as well.

I can't remember exactly why I did get involved with INTERZONE but I think it was something along the lines of "Wouldn't it be nice if there was a fiction magazine I could send my stories to?". I failed to predict that since INTERZONE has been going I haven't had any time to write my own fiction. But never mind - irrespective of this, my commitment to the magazine has grown rather than diminished over the last year. A vague interest and curiosity has blossomed into a grim determination to make the thing succeed.

The criticisms have helped - I remember going to a Leeds Group meeting and being told, on the evidence of the first two issues, that INTERZONE was irrevocably rooted in the sixties and therefore of no relevance to the eighties and hence an anachronism and therefore doomed etc etc.... That was the sort of

attitude which fostered the grim determination. After all, I knew that it would take time to get the thing right, that INTERZONE was a learning process for us. WE've published stories by many of the established authors whose work we admire and many of them did begin to make their reputations in the sixties. But what were we expected to do: produce a whole new school of 1980's writers at the drop of a hat? As far as I personally am concerned, the main raison d'etre of INTERZONE is to bring the work of new and lesser-known writers to the attention of our readers. If we didn't come up with anyone new then we would indeed be rooted in the past. But we are publishing new writers and will continue to do so - not as many as I would like, but naturally we're limited by the material we actually receive. We're not going to publish substandard material out of an obligation either to feature more new writers or to appease established ones...

What's that, Simon? No, this isn't a commercial, honestly. It's like I was saying, INTERZONE is a learning process, and we've made our share of mistakes, like the idea of using a standardised design on our early covers, for instance. That seemed like a good idea in theory but by issue three it was wearing a bit thin and it didn't help our bookshop sales. Now we've got an art editor who's livening up the magazine's originally rather sombre appearance. It's starting to look like it should do. And there are other things I'd like to liven up - like the letter column, for instance. Maybe all of you out there who write such interesting letters to MATRIX would consider dropping INTERZONE a line?

Oh, all right, now I'll get really down-beat just to please Polley. It can be frustrating being a part of a collective. We've published stories in INTERZONE which have made me squirm, (I won't go into which ones they were) but toher people on the collective have liked them and at least one has turned out to be very popular with the readers. So I'm prepared to accept the few stories I don't like in return for the ones that I do and in particular for the one or two in each issue I think are exceptionally good. The idea of an editorial collective has been criticised as liable to publish a bland choice of fiction, on the grounds that anything out of the ordinary would not fit in with the consensus of opinion and would therefore be rejected. If we all had the power of veto, that would indeed be the case. In practice, a story which has been received enthusiastically by a minority of the collective will tend to get into print, even if one or two of us are against it. Because of this, I think we tend to publish a greater range of material than a single editor would. I'm prepared to put up with the occasional squirm to avoid the blandness. After all, not even those of us with good taste have the same good taste all the time.

Nor indeed can those of us who are mercilessly efficient quite get it together all the time. We've had our occasional embarrassing moments in the past year, like the time a package came apart in the post and the Post Office sent it to one of the addresses they found inside. So it was that a famous writer received a copy of his own manuscript, complete with the not entirely complimentary comments of the collective. And then there was our expedition to pick up issue two from the printer's in Alan Dorey's rather ancient Allegro (which had already seen much wear and tear in its previous career in the service of one Graham James). The car made ominous thudding noises all the way from Leeds to Heckmonwike but the additional load of several thousand INTERZONES proved too much for it and it finally gave up the ghost with a load clunk on the far side of Halifax. That was the end of the car.

INTERZONE has fared better. It's made the odd ominous thudding noise itself but it's surprised quiteafew people by coming through its first year and we intend to bring it through its second. Hoping that Polley won't notice, I'll sneak in the fact here that it will help if you re-subscribe or, if you haven't sampled our delights before, sign up for your first subscription. There should be a flyer with details in the mailing but if you can't find it you can send £5 for four issues to me at 21 The Village Street, LEEDS L64 2PR. Good. Polley was looking the other way. I was slightly annoyed to see Joseph Nicholas in the last INFERNO comparing anthologies and magazines. This is a bit like comparing water from the kitchen sink and the bath in the middle of the Sahara. There just aren't enough of either. Support original anthologies by all means, but I hope you'll support INTERZONE as well.

Shards of Babel 5,6. Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, the Netherlands (change of address folks -- take careful note). Available for the local equivalent of US\$4 for 6 issues.

Roelof's English language guide to worldwide, though principally European, fandom. I've recommended this before. I still do recommend it. In fact, if you don't get it I'll come and attend to you personally!

Sic Buiscuit Disintegraf. Dave Rowley and Joy Hibbert, 11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke on Trent, Staffs, ST1 5JG, England. Available for LoC, contribution, 20pence. A not very legible genzine with Ian Dickson's Denvention-bound travelogue never coming alive, and the glimpse of the Brum group in-fighting being as boring as all other glimpses of Brum group in-fighting. Jackie Gresham's thought-provoking article on violence in art is a little ill-informed but indisputably passionate and worthwhile.

Sodds! Lore 3. c/o 18 Selkirk Road, Tooting, London, SW17 0ES, England. Available for trade, LoC, contribution.

This very clearly produced zine has a more sfictional bent than most contemporary zines, including a patchily funny piss-take of Ballardesque fiction, an investigation of matter transmitters, the place of the computer in modern sf, cynicism in scientists, how to avoid sequels, and an appreciation of Barry Bayley. Oh yes, plus the odd appearance from Mr Justice Dredd. I think the team aren't really ready yet to handle all these long words on the same page, but it's basically a pleasurable experience.

Songs 8. Peter E Presford, "Ty Gwyn", Maxwell Close, Buckley, Clwyd, North Wales. Availability? Try asking the man.

A few more days in the life of Pete, with assorted musings along the way. Not a lot to say about this. You either like it, or you like it.

Spook. Elspeth Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Scotland, G72 9NA.

A zine of poems of a ghostly yet personal disposition, plus a small story and a personal recollection, also spiritually inclined. Not to mention a cover cartoon story. 9 years old is what she claims to be, so I'll just have to wait.

Speark Betterer English (Rockcon PR3). Bob Shaw, 2/L 244 West Princes Street, Kelvinbridge, Glasgow, G4 9DP, Scotland. Availability? Ask the man.

Nicely produced zine in red on white, with Bob proudly relating the tale of producing it on his VIC-20, which is quite interesting. The tale of how Proton Books bit the dust may well be interesting but may be less than wise if the law is still taking its clubfooted time. Also mentioned, how he accepted the COFF award, the tale of a cat, and some putrid jokes.

Station Identification 2. Ann Wainwright, Flat 8, 84 High Street, Norton, Cleveland, England.

A poetry zine full of young poetry. John Bitcheman can sleep easily yet. Send about 30pence in stamps.

This Never Happens 3. Christina Lake, 20a Chatsworth Parade, Queensway, Petts Wood, Kent, BR5 1DF & Lilian Edwards, Cripps Court, Queens College, Cambridge. Available for the usual.

Lots of reduced-size type on green paper to make the head ache, and even more artwork on the same green paper to sometimes delight the eye. The words continue to be less distinctive than the illustrations. This issue sees Christina investigating childhood religion, Pam Wells being bullied, Lilian discussing using lines instead of words, les dames on comics for girls and their own comoc for girls, and Dave Langford on new religions. I keep expecting this zine to really start going somewhere. So far I'm still waiting, but I fancy it may well be worth the wait. Maybe next time.

Thyme 22-25. Roger Weddall, 79 Bell Street, Fitzroy, 3065, Australia (another coa). £5 for 9 issues from Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London.

What's going on where in the land of Oz, informative in a long-distance way and occasionally interesting. 25 contains the first Albaconrep to reach me, beating even Ansible by about 12,000 miles. Now that is initiative.

This ain't no real summer. blackie fortuna, 158 Blackbird Leys Road, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 5HT, England.

Another poetry zine, so send the postage at the very least. Again, the laureate can sleep easy, but blackie does manage more than one small verbal firework of bitterness.

Twll Ddu 20. Dave Langford, address as for Ansbile. Available for large donations to TAFF.

One of the features I like about Dave's writing is the feeling it conveys that he can't quite believe that life is arranged so absurdly. A Dave's-eye view of life in a new home, life at Oxford, and life in the loccol. Strangely, Rob Hansen's excellent cover conveys that feeling even better than Dave's words.

Two Dead Hedgehogs 2. Jim Barker, 113 Windsor Road, Falkirk, Stirlingshire, FK1 5DB, Scotland. Available at whim only.

Jim tells the story of his fannish overdose, at least so far as organising is concerned, and the life of a freelance cartoonist -- which he now is. Just how good he is can be seen by the cartoon series, the life and times of Jim Barker. If you haven't got a copy then find someone who has and offer them your body...

Wing Window 5. John D Berry, 525 19 Ave East, Seattle, Washington 98112, USA. Available to "all the usual suspects".

A surprisingly relaxed zine emanating from the heartland of intense fandom Americanis. John looks at Barry Malzberg (and rather wishes he hadn't), fanac in general, and the Seattle scene. Terry Hughes tells of using the launderette next door to the headquarters of the American Nazi party and other clean-living folk. Plus odd words from elsewhere. Still recommended.

Wark 2. Rosemary Pardo, 24 Othello Close, Hertford, Huntingdon, PE18 7SU, England. Available for the usual, or 20pence.

A small zine dedicated to fantasy fandom and as such will be of much more interest to fantasy fans than it was to me.

Waste of a Tree 1. Alex Stewart, 11a Beverley Road, Colchester, Essex, England & John Murphy, 7 Bergholt Road, Colchester, Essex, England.

You've said it yourself, lads -- the waste of a tree. Nothing wrong with any of the contents -- comics fandom, nukes, politics, archery, Channel 4 -- but none of the articles give much indication that you have actually sat down and thought what you want to say and whether anyone else will be interested in it. My advice is go get Shallow End and then have a good, long think before issue 2. I don't doubt you can do a whole lot better than this.

So that's it. My last fanzine review. After some 68 issues in this column I'm not even sure I want to see another fanzine as long as I live. Who knows, I may even find the time to do my own, real soon now. Who the next reviewer is I don't know, so I'd suggest sending your zines to Simon, unless he has any better ideas. Oh yes, and why not send the odd one or two to me, wean me off them gently.

Just in case there is anyone out there wondering on the title to my column, it comes from William Blako's "London Song": "And the hapless soldier's sigh runs in blood down palace walls". This is the hapless soldier saying goodbye.

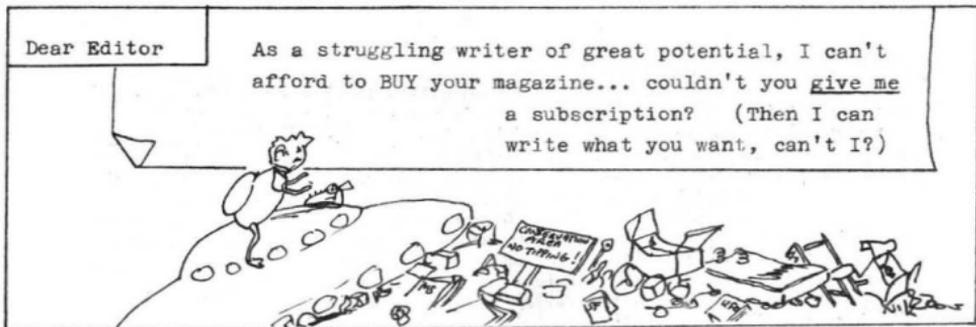
((Well, nowt more remains there but to thank Martyn for his long stint on fanzine reviewing and to hope that other bits, snippets etc. will be turning up from him now and again (witness this issue's review of Flash Gordon meets Fozzie Bear): we're still working on the regular column idea, but in the meantime keep the fanzines flowing, as all those received will be mentioned, briefly or otherwise, each issue. A number of people want to do an odd slot, and I hope we'll have an organised rota running in the near future - this mainly depends on how my serious gin-on-the-brain condition develops. Gin-on-the-brain, a doctor writes, is a common occupational disease also known as the MTs, or Managerium Tremens, and is usually brought on by trying to run a bookshop three doors down from a public house. The process is either terminal to the patient or to the bookshop, I am told. We shall see who breaks first.....))



Fanzine follies.....

As you may have realised, the fanzine area is in some upheaval. This is due to various incompetences and a desire to change the old style of reviewing. The hardest thing is to get someone different each two months who will remember to send the reviews in on time, and although many people promise, few deliver. So, for Matrix 49 there will be a review column by infamous Lillian Edwards (now you'll have to do it, mate!), and fanzines will be passed on to her from Matrix HQ, unless those of you who know Lillian personally want to send them directly to her, which is just as good, nicht wahr? All I will do here is to run through some of the zines already gratefully received by us - more in depth comments next issue:

- ADBUMP 2, from Paul Vincent, 25 Dovedale Avenue, Pelsall, Walsall, West Midlands
- ANSIBLE 33, from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading
- EMPTIES 1 & 2, from Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG
- MINCE 3, from Ian Sorensen, 142 Busby Road, Clarkston, Glasgow, G76 8BG
- PROLAPSE, from Peter Weston, 72 Beeches Drive, Erdington, Birmingham B24 0DT
- RAYMOND X.BRELLIGAN VERSUS THE COSMIC SPACE PLANET, from the Sverifans; try Ahrvid Engholm, Maskinistgatan 98b, S-117 47 Stockholm, Sweden
- SORGENKIND, from Christina Lake, 20a Chatsworth Parade, Queensway, Petts Wood, Kent, BR5 1DF
- SHARDS OF BABEL 7 & 8, from Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, The Netherlands. This might be of particular interest over the coming months, giving news and scandals from Europe, and can be subbed to for £2-50 in cash or postgiro, giving six issues through the year. Includes UK news as well.



:: COMPETITION :: COMPETITION :: COMPETITION ::

M46: *The Aldiss 50-Word Mini-Sagas*

misjudged by Dave Langford

Writing an SF story in 50 words is not so easy. G.K.Chesterton once wrote that it was so hard to be *subtle* in toy-theatre performances, but dead easy to do Armageddon (lights & horrible noises off): "the stage is too small for any but the largest things." Ditto the mini-saga; mighty *Focusman* Chris Bailey spotted this and predicted countless God/Bomb/Armageddon pieces; for the record, about 50% of the entries fell into this rather broad category.

The glorious roll of honour: CHRIS BAILEY, WILLIAM BAINS, PAUL BAXTER, ANDY BLINSDEN, G.A.BRYANT, PHILIP COLLINS, BENEDICT S.CULLUM, JOAN DANIELS, SIMON GOSDEN, SUSAN GROSE, MARGARET HALL, HANA KHALAF, DAVID PIPER, HILARY ROBINSON, MARCUS ROWLAND, MOIRA SHEARMAN, GRAHAM SMITH, JOHN SPENCER, ALEX STEWART, SUE THOMASON, ALAN THOMSON, MIKE WIGLEY and DAVE WOOD. A total of 23... of which, more later.

Judging these things is all a bit subjective. If you don't like D.Piper's Armageddon story (about the best of that 50%), imagine what the rest were like...

HOW I CONQUERED THE WORLD BY HYPNOTIZING A RETIRED MOVIE-STAR

No fallout, no starvation-enraged mobs could touch us here. We became drunken and disgusting as the celebration continued.

"It worked!" chortled one drunken industrialist. "Those damn Europeans won't bother us now! Computer error—bullshit! Now for the fucking n-----s!"

He talked too much. I decided to have him liquidated.

For those who remember the New Wave and a certain story of Pamela Zoline's, the S.Thomason entry has undeniable charm: Sue expects an offer from *Interzone* soon.

THE MEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE (or Mrs Dale's Die-ary)

MONDAY: I can feel time like a gullet pulsing and contracting around me...

TUESDAY: Elise to dentist. Windows.

WEDNESDAY: Unfaithful again. How can he think I don't know...

THURSDAY: Washing. My fake smile on for keep fit.

FRIDAY: Chops or roast? Choosing one, I murrur, "It's the only way out."

Ah, nostalgia... M.Hall pruned her fantasy-trilogy-in-progress from 450,000 words to the requisite 50, with a little redistribution of the permitted 15-word title:

THE TEMPLE BY THE SACRED HILLS

Sunset flamed in the blood of the sacrifice, gilded the megaliths. Hymns soared into the darkening sky.

END OF AN AGE

The winter goddess, relinquishing power, wept.

"Summers aren't what they used to be," the priestess complained.

BIRTH OF A MYSTERY

The goddess's tears overflowed the land until sighing resignedly, the people began the long haul to Salisbury.

Apparently this is a fictionalization of Margaret's theory as to how Stonehenge came to be made of Prescelly stone. (Oh.) Decisions, decisions; I wanted a straight SF winner but can't find a credible one; pause to flip coins, consult entrails; Margaret gets it for general audacity, I think. Bloody hell, I have to write a *Focus* article based on this lot? Mr.Bains gets the subsidiary prize of great value for guessing 28 entrants to the competition (via calculations based on the 33,000 entries to the *Telegraph* comp; with better *T* circulation figures I'd guessed 20)...

M48: *Desirable Scientifictional Residences*

Langford again

'PRESTIGIOUS COUNTRY RESIDENCE in own grounds (12,000,000 acres) in sought-after district of Mordor: 2 bed, 3 recep, 1500 dungeon cells, armoury, battlements, fortified gates, furnaces, all mod cons. Convenient all amenities, inc. private road to popular local landmark Mt Orodruin. Lease terms include perpetual guarantee against foundation subsidence (usual exclusion clause re acts of ring or ringbearers). Would suit recluse, exiled Head of State or light engineering company...' You can do better than this. Write me a clever estate-agents' ad for some other noted sf/fantasy property; be brief, be witty, be in time for the M49 copydate. Usual £5 book-token prize offered to the entry which most amuses or boggles the impartial Judge: Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, no bribe too large to be accepted...

EPISODE TWO!
LOST ON
TOLK!

Arnold Pharg's DEATH STAR SHIP REVENGEANCE

ADAPTATION
AND ART
BY D. WEST

OH ARTH!

I SAY!

YOU CHAPS
HAVEN'T SEEN
ANY STRAY
SLOBBITS,
HAVE YOU?

DUH?

THE STORY SO FAR:
CAST INTO ANOTHER
DIMENSION BY THEIR
ESCAPE FROM ARKH-
VILLAIN DOCTOR SATURN,
ARTH PUDD, PRINCESS
LAYA AND PROFESSOR
ZODOFF FACE NEW
PERILS ON TOLK...

OH, I'M
SO SORRY-

-I'M LEGLESS
THE ELF, AND
THIS SWEET
LITTLE THING
IS GIMLET
THE DWARF

DUH

IT'S SUCH A
BORE, BUT WE
SEEM TO HAVE
MISLAID THESE
SLOBBITS, AND-

HIYO
SILMARIL!

SUDDENLY..

OH HURRAH!
THIS LOOKS LIKE
ARROGANT, THE
LONE RANGER!

HAIL
ARROGANT!

DUH!

EXTREMISM IN
THE DEFRANCE OF
LIBERTY IS
NO VICE

WHAT NEWS
OF THE
SLOBBITS?

THEY'RE
ON NOW





BUT NOT FAR AWAY
HELP IS CLOSE AT
HAND NOW SOON!

BOYS,
I HEAR
SHOOTIN'!

IT'S
THOSE
TARNATION
URKS!

LET'S
GO
GIT
EM!

HOWDY
FOLKS,
THE NAME
IS ELMER
KING--

-AND THESE
HERE IS THE
RIDERS OF
ROBERT,
MAIN
POSSE OUT OF
ROBERT
CITY

THE URKS
RETREAT
IN DISARRAY!



SEEMS LIKE
YOU HAD A
MITE OF
TROUBLE
HERE

OH, NOTHING
TO SPEAK OF

I SAY--



-WE'RE STILL
SHORT OF A COUPLE
OF SLOBBITS

DON'T
NAG,
GIMLET

PERRY AND
MIFKIN ARE THE
ONES--THE SILLY
LITTLE THINGS
KEEP GETTING
LOST

DUH?

DUH!



OH
ARTH!



THE URKS HAVE
SNATCHED THE
PRINCESS LAYA!



NO USE,
STRANGER,
THAT BLACK
RAIDER HAS
GOT HER FOR
OLD MAN
SATURN



SATURN?!

YOU MEAN
THE ARCH-VILLAIN
DOCTOR SATURN
PURSUES HIS FIENDISH
SCHEMES IN THIS
DIMENSION AS WELL?

SURE

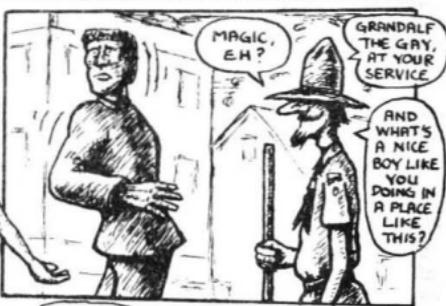
HANGS OUT AT THE DARK
TOWER BLOK
DOWN YONDER
IN MERDE
COUNTY

AND SO...



SATURN
IS BOSS OF
THESE
HERE
URKS

GUESS
YOU'D BEST
RIDE ON BACK
WITH US TO
ROBERT CITY
AND GET SOME
ADVICE



Shock news!

BSFA NOT SOVIET SATELLITE * OUR AGENTS REPORT.....

((Just to turn a few tables, I am now buried under an embarrassment of letters, most of which will have to be savagely truncated, no doubt. Still, response to ..er..certain parts of Matrix 47 was quite fast and furious. I have a funny feeling that response to 48 might be similar, but then again, it might not be my responsibility by then, tee hee. I hear Durham Gaol's quite nice...

No excuses for starting off straight away with Joseph Nicholas and the slow wheels of Indignation. Oddly enough, he took exception to a certain K.Lake's piece in the last issue. Speak, O Muse!))

JOSEPH NICHOLAS,
22 DENBIGH STREET,
PIMLICO,
LONDON SW1V 2ER

Ken Lake's article in Matrix 47, " On Being Introduced to London Fandom" is difficult to take seriously, primarily because of its tone. To call it intemperate, exaggerated and somewhat hysterical is probably to criticise it too much, but there's

no doubt that the substance of what he's saying is eclipsed by the way he says it. To be fair to him, the meeting to which he refers probably wasn't the best one at which a newcomer could get acquainted, but at the same time it strikes me as rather ridiculous for him to write off every BSFA meeting on the basis of an unfortunate experience at one of them - as though, God save us, every meeting is exactly the same - and it is even more ridiculous of him to assume that the attitudes revealed and opinions expressed by certain members of the BSFA administrative hierarchy (e.g. me) - or members of the BSFA fullstop - are typical of them all.

In this letter, I would like to concentrate on that which particularly concerns me, and to which he appears to have taken the greatest offense - the intrusion of politics into the meeting of an SF association. Frankly, I see no reason to apologise for this, or even to attempt to keep politics out of fandom in general. SF is as much (or ought to be) a part of the real world as anything else, and if it has any claim to examine the workings of that world or postulate the possible shape(s) that the future may take, then it must pay close attention to the affairs of the real world. Politics, after all, means more than just voting in local and general elections every few years; it involves the whole field of human interaction, of how we determine we shall live our lives and the heritage we shall pass on to future generations - and, in the year of cruise missile deployment, such questions matter more than ever.

To say as much is perhaps to indulge in propagandising of the kind to which Ken took such exception, but as the panellist whose remarks he has so thoroughly misquoted and caricatured I feel I have every right to restate my own case in my own way, if only for the purpose of setting the record straight. " 'Russia has to defend itself because it is surrounded by American-armed countries' " says Ken. No; what I actually said was that since the 1917 revolution the Soviet Union has perceived itself to be surrounded by enemies (the matter of who supplied the arms never came into it) - i.e. this is what they claim is the case, not what necessarily is the case. And, although I am not for one moment an apologist for the Soviet Union, I have a good deal of sympathy with this view. They have, after all been invaded from the west no less than three times this century, and the basic thrust of the Kremlin's foreign policy since the Second World War has been to provide the nation with a zone of buffer states between it and any future potential aggression. Come to that, their own invasion of Afghanistan (which had in fact already fallen into the Soviet orbit) fits into the same pattern, since it is not only from the west that they feel themselves threatened - as a glance at the map will show, the USSR has the longest and most vulnerable land frontier of any of the world's nations. That frontier is lined with states that, if not overtly hostile, aren't exactly friendly either. Hence its emphasis on land-based forces, including land-based missiles; and hence its consistent rejection of Reagan's "zero option",

which would entail its removing the bulk of its missiles in exchange for a much smaller cut in the number of its opponent's. Not that I managed to say all this - nobody managed to speak for more than 30 seconds at a time without being interrupted by everyone else - but my aim in trying to say it was to demonstrate that current Western perceptions of the Soviet Union's political aims are somewhat false, and that if we're to formulate a more coherent foreign policy with which to counter, contain or accommodate those aims then it behoves us to have a better understanding of what our supposed opponents are really up to... and once we have achieved that better understanding then we shall make greater and swifter strides towards nuclear disarmament and global co-operation.

Still on this subject..." ' The Russians are peace-loving people with no desire to upset anyone' " quotes Ken. In fact, nobody said anything of the kind; but while we're at it we might as well say that the Soviet Union certainly doesn't want war. It tends to be forgotten that it lost over 20 million people in the Second World War, the majority of them non-combatant civilians, and the memory of that loss remains with them to this day. Considering that the men who now command the USSR's military affairs for the most part fought in that war and saw the destruction and loss at first hand, it's hardly likely that they'd be seriously planning to wage a nuclear war that would result in even greater destruction and loss (and over a much shorter time span to boot). This means, in effect, that the fear of Soviet expansionism is greatly exaggerated, and in some respects based upon entirely mythical premises - in the first place, the fact that they have crushed revolt within their own sphere of influence (Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968) is hardly grounds for arguing that they're poised to invade everywhere at the slightest opportunity (and in the light of their current problems in Afghanistan, Romania and Poland they'd be idiotic to try); and, in the second place, the idea of fomenting world revolution earlier was abandoned deliberately by Stalin in the thirties in favour of the doctrine of " building socialism in one country " (i.e. in the Soviet Union) - the Kremlin's recent explicit refusal of aid to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua points to their continued adherence to this doctrine. On top of this, Ken's list of countries in which the Soviet Union has intervened can be quite easily matched (and exceeded) with a list of countries in which the USA has intervened - so his implication that the West is completely blameless in such matters is simply fatuous.

" Any audience comment which revealed the previous speaker to have been misled or in error was airily dismissed with that hoary old gimmick ' we weren't talking about that ' followed by a reiteration of the incorrect statement " says Ken. That's himself he's talking about here, actually, and for the record, the point of his that he claims was ignored concerned Hitler, appeasement and the thirties, a subject with no bearing on the current arms debate. The world of the eighties is very different from the world of the thirties; the attitudes are different, the factors are different, the risks are different; the present neither recapitulate nor parallels the past in any way at all, and to attempt comparisons of the kind he did is a straightforward waste of time, a futile exercise that hinders rather than helps clarity of thought and obscures the issues involved. We were, I think, right to reject his argument.

However, all this is perhaps academic now. Fixed in his characterisation of us all as anti-British and Trotskyist (I'm left-wing, yes, but not that left-wing) he will no doubt steer clear of future meetings, which would be a pity. He clearly feels he has something to offer, and in other circumstances (a meeting more orderly than the one he attended, perhaps) - and provided he can moderate his tone - we'd give him a sympathetic hearing. The very least he could do, therefore, is turn up to another meeting. I'd even stand him a drink if he did.

((Oddly enough, Ken was in fact at BECCON, and having talked to him, he didn't appear to be the fascist lackey of the Iron Heel that I had been lead to expect - he was a pleasant enough chap in a bright red shirt, and I hope he enjoyed the convention. Still, it's now Suter to face Lake.....

At the meeting in question, I was nominally in charge of proceedings. I had recently taken over the meetings, and had not had time to arrange for a guest - after all, you cannot force an author to attend each time; most are only too happy to come along, but you have to fit in with their time-tables. So, for January and February I had to arrange substitute attractions, and one of these was a panel, merely for fun, entitled 'Does the Team Think?' For those who were not there, the team was made up of Dave Langford, Judith Hanna, Joseph Nicholas and Ian Sewell (Ian, by the way, was attending only his second BSFA meeting, so you don't have to necessarily be an old hand to get involved), and I was the Question-master.

Far from evading questions, the panel answered all the propositions put to them; however, some were given less enthusiasm than others admittedly - you try to answer questions ranging from make-up to the atom bomb off the top of your head with no prior warning! Really, the main thrust of Ken's dissatisfaction seems to be the area involving the Thatcher administration and the issue of Cruise missiles. He seems to have objected to the strong opinions voiced in this debate, especially that of Joe Nicholas. In my earlier debate report I may have given the impression that Joe was ranting - this wasn't so; he cares passionately about the nuclear issue and argues strongly for his beliefs in the hope that others will be persuaded to see his side of things. It doesn't help when people like Ken bring in irrelevant elements like Hitler and WW2.

((Here Jeff makes some political points which say in some measure the same basic things as Joseph, and I hope he'll forgive me to progressing a bit further into his letter.))

As for the Daily Mail incident, I think Mr. Lake got the wrong end of the stick. Yes, I read the article on the Greenham Common women and introduced it into the discussion because it was relevant. However, anyone who reads the Mail must do so with a pinch of salt as anything it reports on gets a heavy Tory bias - any denouncement of the Greenham Common protest would hardly be done with a notion of fairness or balance. The Mail is slightly right of Attila the Hun, so what was actually meant was that nobody, with any sense, reads the Mail with any seriousness.

On the subject of the smoking debate, Ken has also got his facts wrong. One of the subjects raised was the question of banning smoking in public places, including the BSFA meeting. One of the arguments was that of revenue collected by the Government, but Ken's tirade is slightly over the top. Perhaps one should point out that if the Government really wanted to do something about the health hazards of smoking they could ban all advertising and sponsorship, then tax tobacco out of existence. They won't - simply because they do derive such a huge amount of revenue from tobacco duty, whichever party is in power. Ken was mistaken on my statement concerning the South Hants. group. This is what did happen in this case:

When I was running the SESFG I was not unaware of the distress caused by the smoking habits of myself and others, so as we met on the second and fourth Friday of the month, I proposed that we make the second Friday a non-smoking meeting, and the fourth Friday and special events smoking meetings. This was put to the vote and adopted. We could do this because we used a partitioned part of the lounge of the pub, and we smokers could nip behind the partition for a quick smoke. However, if a member of the public entered our part of the lounge then we could not enforce this on them. At no point was this formally raised as a proposal for the BSFA. The BSFA meets not twice, but once a month, so we would have to segregate the bar we hire, and this would have to be voted on by the membership at the AGM after all the arguments had been heard.

On another point, I quote Ken Lake: "On present showing, the members of the BSFA who attend the London meetings are Trotskyist, anti-British...." I found that personally offensive, as I am not, nor have I ever been, a Trotskyist, nor am I anti-British; I am proud of my nationality, but that doesn't mean I have to accept without question all that government and society dictates. A wildly

inaccurate statement like that will not endear either side of the arguers to you. There were, in the audience, those that were against Joseph, and there was one person, at least, on the panel who was a supporter of Mrs. Thatcher and her policies. Ken then went on to say that after making the effort to visit " this specifically SF body and (heard) little about SF all evening " he felt dubious about the whole affair. Well, that evening, no, there wasn't much about SF, but neither are the pages of Matrix confined to SF, though it often turns up. He is hardly qualified to make judgements about meetings in general after only one - he did not come to the interview with John Brunner or the talk given by Gollancz chairman John Bush, both of which had everything to do with SCIENCE FICTION and nothing to do with politics. May I suggest that Ken comes along to another meeting and he may be pleasantly surprised.

((Chris Bailey also writes in the same vein, but at less length...))

CHRIS BAILEY,
23 CLEVEDON ROAD,
LONDON SE20 7QQ

The dignified response to Ken Lake's piece is to ignore it ; what does compel me to break silence is the thought that the potential attendee of the London meetings might be deterred by this nonsense.

This might not be a necessary worry, as several new people attended the last meeting, possibly attracted by the thought of violence and cigarettes. As I recall the February meeting, speakers were indeed queried and interrupted, but there was no 'shouting down' as such, and Ken was allowed to stand up and speak on disarmament at inordinate length before the audience became restless. Some idea of the illogical and disjointed nature of his arguments can be gleaned from the inaccurate and hysterical manner in which he flings around terms such as ' Trotskyist ' and ' anti-British ' in his article. I think that what Ken is saying in actuality is " Unlike the arguments of the other speakers, mine should not have been challenged. " More damaging than the exaggerated account of selected incidents is the stream of innuendo he uses to support his contentions - that every attendee of the London meetings is a yahoo (so surely by implication is the entire BSFA membership), that the room resembled a convention of tobacco executives being held in a boot locker (it's light, welcoming and an ideal size), that the virtuous Portsmouthites are organised by the BSFA (they're not).....I could go on. I recommend the undecided member who can make it to some of the future meetings to do so, and to ignore Ken's fit of pique - his is the loss, I think.

((On the subject of Ken Lake's article, WAHF Andy Hobbs with much the same view of Ken's piece - Andy thinks that Ken must be " more one-sided than even, let's say, the Daily Mail. " How cruel can you get? Philip Collins couldn't bring himself to reply " to such totally dismissive generalisations " and David Langford said rude things. John Harvey also discussed the rhyme and reason of the King of Diamonds as a venue - probably go into that more next issue. Meanwhile, on to other things.....))

ANDY HOBBS,
2 POST OFFICE YARD,
HOVERINGHAM,
Notts.

I was interested to see the way in which you neatly avoided the issue of " high new member turn-over " and its seeming lack of explanation. Why is it happening? Is the attitude to SF that is displayed in BSFA publications frightening people off? Let's face it,

very little has been said in defence of the genre - although this may be a difficult task - and it may be that the members want to read good, constructive favourable criticism of SF, along with a certain degree of idolatory writing in favour of the Greats. Frightening, isn't it, but when you think that the words Science Fiction appear somewhere in our revered Association's title, I think you may see what I mean.

((So that's what the SF bit means! Oh, damn. Otherwise, see note at bottom of nearly-editorial for what I meant to write. I disagree that very little has been said on the subject, but perhaps the viewers at home would like to get off their asses and give such a defence in these pages? Just because I slag it off sometimes doesn't mean I don't read it, but perhaps it does

tend to affect new members if that's all they hear. I didn't mean to drop the subject - sorry, I was just short of space and time to fit it in. More on this below.....))

ROY GRAY,
17 ULLSWATER,
MACCLESFIELD,
CHESHIRE.

How do I define ' awful warning '? Well, the BSFA is a limited company, and if members are seen as customers then one could say we should retain customer loyalty. If new members turn over rapidly, we are not maintaining that loyalty and this could be a sign of a firm in trouble.

In the past, new members seemed to rapidly become active, and if these are no longer staying with us, there could be a shortage of officers before long. Could the BSFA be the n th bankruptcy of 1984? Happily, it seems doubtful, but certainly it's worth paying attention to the problem. I often wonder if they are getting the information they need from the BSFA. It seems that newcomers straight from 'Star Wars', IASFM, Dr. Who and Blake's Seven soon find that SF comprises Jerry Cornelius and publications such as Crash, whereas a more gentle introduction to the delights of SF in its avant garde form might be more helpful. What do we send new members nowadays? What about an unbiased guide to well-known authors for those newly-joined?

((I sometimes wonder, or merely muse aimlessly over my fifteenth gin, if the present steerspeople of the BSFA and its publications should get together and talk about this. You may well be right. I mean, I'm only the editor of Matrix. I don't know what goes on in the BSFA. A word from our Chairman, perhaps...tee hee...No, well, let's get on to a comment on Neil Allan's letter in the last issue -))

SIMON INGS,
10 GEDDES WAY,
SHEET,
PETERSFIELD,
HANTS.

Neil Allan talks of ' mindless sheep'. This crass chauvinism in talking about dabblers in lower-market SF as if they were something strange and menacing to us all in the elite is both misleading and distasteful. I know it's pleasant to talk about the SF genre - it gives us a cosy insularity, and it provides us with an excuse to form clubs, write zines, hold cons etc. But the sad fact is, SF is not a genre. It might have its own little - very little - niche in the bookshops, but SF is in no way a class in itself. It is an alternative approach to all types of fiction. It is the extrapolation of existing literary forms to extreme or absurd lengths (in using absurd I mean it in its constructive sense - re Ballard). So, on SF's lowest level we are bound to get, say, the Space Western, the Space Romance, the Space Thriller - extrapolations of existing generally poor quality genres to extreme lengths. The best SF is that which corresponds to the best FICTION; in other words, its strength lies in its resistance to being pigeonholed, in its originality of principle and intent, which is why at its best, SF tends to have a fiction label plastered on it (as discussed in Vector 112).

So, tell me - do readers of the best fiction feel threatened or insular, or conversely superior and snobbish, when another load of trash fiction hits the shelves, and is bought up by ' mindless sheep ' ((sometimes I suspect they do, when you think about it)) ? No, they don't, because long ago they reconciled themselves to the realities of their literary market. People have been reading trash since the 19th century, yet it has never stopped this minority cultivating a taste for ' good ' literature.

The fact is that good SF, like all good literature, lasts, no matter how much lasers and spaceships may become part of the sluch market. Just as readers of literature are not lost by the publication of poor writing, so SF fans are not lost by the existence of poor SF.

((I shall leave others to respond to those points - there seems to be something in there which makes sense. However, I shall have to run into a brief mention of those I can't quote in full, I'm afraid. See overleaf....

PHILL PROBERT of NOVACON fame sent in lots of illos and some comments, a mixture of which I hope to run eventually. NIK MORTON once again dropped us a line, BENEDICT CULLUM brought up an issue of royalties which will be in the next issue, comments flew in from aged DAVE LANGFORD - who even contributed to the Great Smoking Debate, as did WILLIAM BAINS, who claims D.WEST is entirely pseudonymous. Having just lost money to him at dominoes again, I sincerely wish it were true, and am willing to help anyone who wants to have a crack at it, 'it' being defined in this case as 'the act of making D. West entirely pseudonymous'. Oh, and more comments from PHILIP COLLINS, and from MARK GREENER, and NIGEL ROBERTS, and some contributions from artist SHEP which I hope to be able to use. Thank you all, whimper, grovel, false tears fall on typewriter....keep sending them in, or you know what'll happen - the KITTENS will get you.

" Good night, Jim."
" Good night, Spock."
" Mmmmmmmmm...."
" Ooooooh!"
" Mmmmm.."
Silence descended.

Next deadline: 2nd week in September, please, masters and mistresses!

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