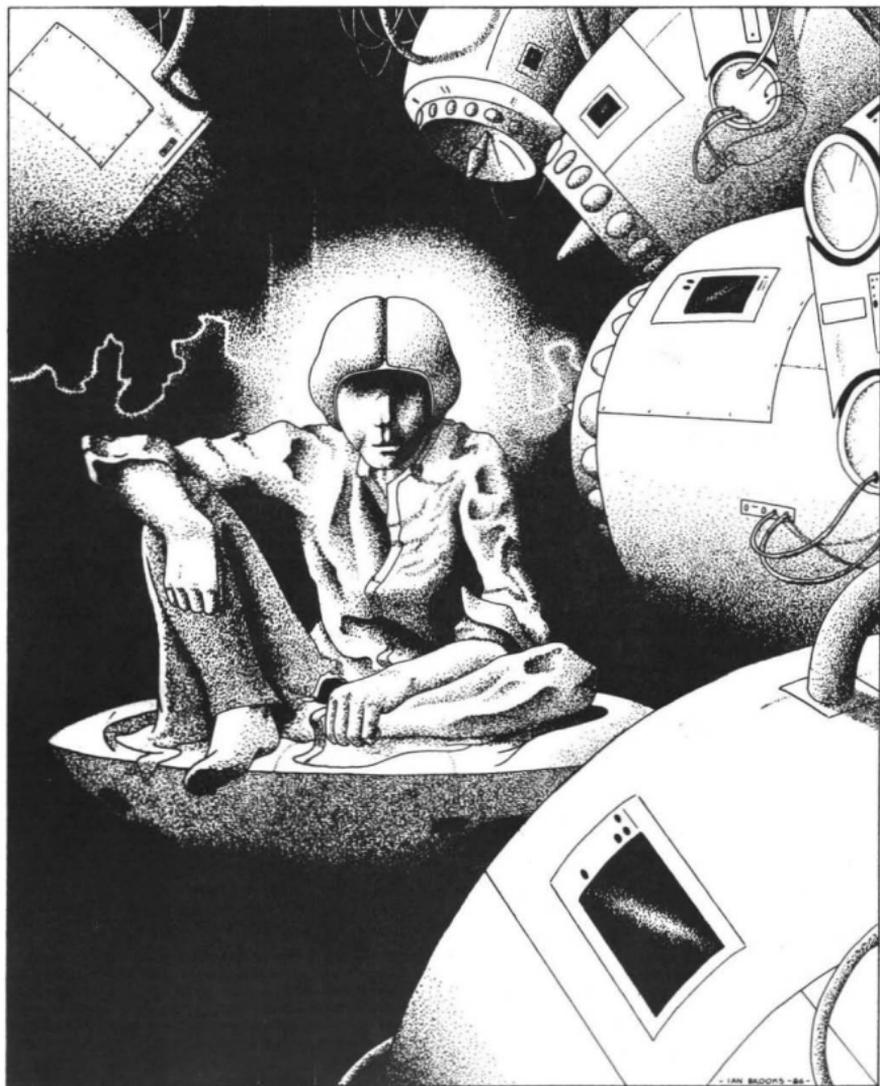


M **A·T·R·I·X**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION



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The rest of the committee for more sympathy, advice and encouragement

I have work in hand from Philip Collins, Mark Gittins, Andy Sawyer, Pam Wells and Steve Higgins, Mark Gittins, Bernard Smith, David Morton, Mic Rogers.

DEADLINE FOR MATRIX 66 - September 14th

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BSFA MEMBERSHIP

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Sandy Brown
BSFA Membership Secretary
18 Gordon Terrace
Blantyre
Lanarkshire
G72 9NA

Membership renewals to:

Keith Freeman
269 Wykeham Road
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Berkshire
RG6 1PL

RED SHIFT

The Editorial

Today I started thinking about the number of active BSFA members, you know, how many people are actually seen to be doing anything for BSFA and came to the conclusion that at present it's probably about 75 people, including the Committee, the reviewers and the people who write in. And what I really want to know is what the other 725-odd people are doing? Are they even reading this? What do they want from the BSFA? Are they satisfied with what they are getting from us? And if they weren't, would they actually bother to write in and tell us why, and say what it was they did want.

And you know something else? It just aint good enough. A society in which the bulk of the membership are passive consumers is at best boring, at worse more or less dead. A small group of people work steadily on, fanning the flame of enthusiasm, trying to make a show, whilst the apathetic masses drain that vitality and throw aside the drained carcass of that committee and wait for the next set of idealistic enthusiasts to feed them.

Okay, so what are we going to do to remedy this?

Yes, WE! We are all in this together, you know. You want a thriving BSFA - at least, the small handful who've bothered to make any comment seem to want this august body to keep going - but at the moment I get the impression that people imagine it is solely the Committee's job to run this society. Well, we will give some genuinely efficient administration but we might as well whistle if you don't take advantage of what's on offer and actively support us.

So, how do you do that? Let us accept that we can't all be in a position to take an active part in helping run the show. However, that doesn't eliminate everyone. Turning up at the AGM at Eastercon would have helped, and I'd take a bet that rather more than about ten BSFA members were actually at Albacon this year. How about redeeming yourselves by turning up for the EGM at Novacon? This is your chance to have a say in the running of your society, rather than griping afterwards about what should have been done and wasn't. Omnipotent the Committee might like to be but it is not telepathic.

Okay, so you can't get to the AGM, the EGM, the collating weekends (and I really do think it's about time we did



all start making an effort to turn up now and again - I know I ought to), what's left?

Well, there are these four magazines, see. *Vector* which handles all the critical writing about SF, and the hardback book reviews, *Paperback Inferno* which covers all the paperback reviews, *Focus* which has dealt with all aspects of the craft of writing and getting your stuff published, and there is *Matrix*, the one in your hand, the one which covers news, reviews, information and anything else that's left over, along with all sorts of interesting articles, and the letters column.

What you could do, and I hope this doesn't sound too revolutionary, is contribute to these magazines. For anything up to 90% of you these magazines are your only contact with the BSFA so this is your chance to be part of what's going on. How about writing something?

Now, I realise that not everyone finds it easy to write long critical articles, and not everyone enjoys reviewing, so why not write something for *Matrix*, and enjoy participation without tears.

The major function of *Matrix*, as I seem to have been saying ever since I got this job, is to act as a clearing house for information and as a forum for the exchange of views and opinions. It's the bulletin board of the BSFA if you like. And like a computer, if you want something out, you have to put something in first.

And this is HOW you're going to participate!

I am absolutely convinced that every last one of you could supply me with at

least one useful piece of information, if you were so minded. All it takes is a letter and a stamp. I'll even let you send it second class, but send it you must, and send it you will. I've a good line in continual nagging.

Book shops, comics shops, games shops - ideally, I want to locate all the shops in the country which specialise to some degree in SF and fantasy, comics or gaming equipment, and anything else I may have forgotten. I need is you lot to write in and tell me about your local shops.

I need the shop's name and its address. Opening times would also be useful, and it would be helpful to know if the shop runs a mail-order service and whether it produces catalogues.

If you want to be a little more sophisticated tell me about its stock, whether it's biased towards new or second-hand, the proportion of SF to fantasy, anything you think might be useful. Does it stock comics as well? Or games?

And how about clubs? Do you belong to a local group, or to a university society. Or do you belong to a fan club or appreciation society of some sort, a media group perhaps, or a gaming group? If so, all you have to do is tell Ron Gemmill. Ron Gemmill is the new Clubs Liaison Officer, and he is even now waiting to hear from you.

What we want to know is this. What is your club/group called? Who is the secretary, or the person to contact. What does your group do - does it have regular meetings, formal or informal, do you show films and have speakers, or is it just a regular, informal get-together in the pub? Where does it meet, how often, and at what time? Do you publish a magazine (and if so would you please send me details on that, and a copy for review in *Matrix*).

Be adventurous, how about a brief article on your club or group, say 200-300 words, just to tell the world all about yourselves. You might even recruit new members. And how about advertising your special events in advance in *Matrix*. You might improve attendance. And then you could write a report of your meetings from time to time. The possibilities are endless, and not too burdensome, so do us and yourself a favour and get in touch with Ron Gemmill at 79 Mansfield Close, Birchwood, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 6RN. We'll be very pleased indeed to hear from you.

I mentioned magazines just then. What do you read? Apart from Asimovs, F&SF and

Locus? There are hundreds of groups, societies and individuals producing magazines that I know absolutely nothing about. I want to find those magazines so that I can let people know what's available. I also want to receive copies of those magazines for inclusion in the magazine review column. I want to know its title, price or availability (ie for trade, locs, stamps etc), its subject matter, the editor's name, where to get the zine, production method, average page count, frequency of appearance.

I want news. News is anything that someone might not have heard about. I want national news, local news, anything of interest to SF fans. I want to hear about signing sessions, media or theatrical events speaker meetings, anything which might be of interest. Tell me beforehand and I'll advertise the event, or else write me a report of what happened.

I also want news of conventions, and that includes general media cons, Star Trek cons, gaming weekends, comics conventions. Tell me about them and they can go in the convention listing. Take the entries there as an example of the sort of information I need.

Afterwards, tell me about the convention. What was it like, did you enjoy it, why was it successful, why didn't it work, what did you like most/hate most. What happened, were any good films shown?

You can also write articles and reviews for *Matrix*. Contrary to popular belief you don't have to be J G Ballard or William Gibson to get something into print. You can see your very own articles in print, right before your very eyes in *Matrix*.

We need media reviews, which should be sent to Mark Greener as at present. Media means television, radio, theatre and film and anything else you come across that might be of interest. And SF? - well, we carried a review of a novel interpretation of Voltaire's *Candide* recently, if that gives you any clues. I am taking SF to mean speculative fiction for the purposes of this magazine in order to cover as wide a range of material as possible. For example, is anyone going to see *Metamorphoses* at the Mermaid Theatre in London - if so, do me a review. It doesn't have to be a huge piece of work, just 3-400 words conveying your thoughts on the production.

If you don't fancy that, write something for the new SOAPBOX column, your very own chance to have your say on anything under the sun. It could be about SF, or

anything under the sun so long as you feel passionately enough about it to put something down on paper. It's much warmer than going to Hyde Park, and it doesn't strain your vocal chords half so much.

Or letters. Write and tell me how much you like *Matrix*, or tell me that I'm making a right pigs-ear of it, and then tell me what I ought to be doing. Comment on everything in the last issue, or comment on just one thing. But write. You can all manage one letter a year, can't you? Even if it's to tell me to piss off because you're busy.

And artwork too. I am discovering some talented artists among the membership, but I still need more work, especially small spacefiller pieces. Black-and-white artwork will be much appreciated.

But whatever happens, *Matrix* cannot

survive without the help of the membership of the BSFA, and that's you lot, out there, even now throwing this aside because you think it's boring and you can't be bothered. Well, you'd better be bothered, and soon, or else you won't have the luxury of being able to throw the magazine aside.

You understand? Good, so get out there and start working.

In the meantime, read *Matrix 65* and enjoy. It may not be the revolutionary new zine you were all expecting, but I did warn you not to expect miracles overnight. However, I think most people will find something of interest even if several features are slightly shorter than normal.

And don't forget to start writing (and drawing)!

MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD

HELP WANTED

I'm trying to compile a complete listing of SF clubs and groups in the UK and worldwide for *Conspiracy*, the Worldcon in Brighton in 1987.

If you are a member of a local or university group, please GET IN TOUCH as soon as possible. **WHEN** and **WHERE** does your club meet and **WHO** should I send information to?

I am also collecting fanzines, clubzines and newszines from now until August 1987, for display in the fan room at *CONSPIRACY*. This is good publicity for your group or zine. Use it!

GO ON! Deluge me with mail!!!

I am Pam Wells of 24a Beech Road, Bowes Park, London, N11 2DA. Or you can phone me on 01-899-0401 after 8pm and at weekends.

We have found an excellent pub on the outskirts of Canterbury - good beer, good food, and a landlady who reads SF - and we are thinking of trying to start up a regular group meeting. Anybody interested, please get in touch.

We are Maureen Porter, Paul Kincaid and John Fairey, and we can be contacted via 114 Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1ES. Tel: Folkestone (0303) 52939 anytime

WANTED

Paperback editions of Grendel Briarton (Reginald Bretnor) *Through Space and Time with Ferdinand Feghoot* (*The Compleat Feghoot*); Groff Conklin (ed) *Science Fiction Oddities*; L Sprague DeCamp *Tales from Gavagan's Bar* (Bantam edition only) and *Divide and Rule*; Joe Haldeman *Cosmic Laughter*, and many others.

Offers and requests for his full wants list to Ken Lake
115 Markhouse Avenue
London,
E17 8AY

(Tel: 01-520 2065)

FOR SALE

Twenty Dr Who paperback books - £5

or will exchange for *21st Century Foss* by Chris Foss (must be in good condition)

Contact: Patrick Lee
24 Ousden Drive
Cheshunt
Herts
EN8 9RL

WALKING ON GLASS

The BSFA Column

FOCUS

FOCUS is returning! Its new incarnation will debut in October - on one condition: we have very few articles or stories on hand, and need your contributions NOW.

We intend that *FOCUS* should appear regularly once again and be a tough, thought-provoking and entertaining forum for all those with an interest in the sharp end of sf and fantasy. In terms of articles, some of the subjects we hope to cover are:

THE EASY OPTION OF DYSTOPIA
PARANOIA AND THE WRITER
COMEDY IN SF AND FANTASY
ROMANTICISM VS NATURALISM
FEAR, LOATHING AND PREVARICATION
ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STYLE
PROS AND CONS OF 'FORMULAS'

We shall also be keen to pursue our rôle as the BSFA's fiction outlet. As well as encouraging new writers who have never submitted work before, we'd like to feature 'near misses' (stories which have done the rounds of the pro outlets and have nearly-but-not-quite made it), regular competitions, and workshop-style criticism of what we print (and we want to hear strong voices from the BSFA's fiction seedbeds, the ORBITER groups).

Market news, a 'neglected ideas' section, words from the wise (or at least the famous), letters, and the very best black and white illustrations will also appear in every issue.

So send articles and stories immediately to either of the new editors:

Paul Grunwell
218 Rainsford Road
CHELMSFORD
Essex
CM1 2PD
(0245 350889)

Liz Holliday
108 Twyford House
Chisley Road
LONDON
N15
(01-809 1406)

Mike Moir has asked me to apologise to those of you who have written to him in his capacity as Information Officer of the BSFA.

He's in the process of moving house so all his reference works are packed away in boxes at the moment. normal service will be resumed as soon as Mike has a permanent address. We'll let you know.

WANTED

Applicants for the job of BSFA Membership Secretary

I intend to retire from the post of Membership Secretary, when a replacement is found by the Committee. I've been doing it for over seven years now, and it's time someone else had a chance to bring new ideas to the job. Totally unpaid, it involves paperwork, paperwork, finance and paperwork.

It's not the sort of job you can take on for a couple of months, then back out of - that just costs the BSFA badly-needed money for wasted advertising and stationery. But if you are prepared to do the job for at least a couple of years, drop me a line at 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Lanarkshire, G72 9NA, and I send you - COMPLETELY WITHOUT OBLIGATION - a job description to enable you to decide whether you want to apply to the Committee for the post.

HURRY, AVAILABLE ONLY WHILE STOCKS LAST!

Sandy Brown

On a sad note, Ansible carried a note that Roger Gilbert from Swansea died of a brain haemorrhage in late June. Older members of the BSFA may recall that Roger Gilbert used to be Information Officer for the BSFA many moons ago.

INTRODUCING ...

The first of a series of articles introducing the various members of the BSFA Committee. Why not, I thought, start with me, as I'm here.

I'm Maureen Porter, the newest member of the BSFA Committee, and presently editing my first edition of *Matrix*, the first of many, I hope.

My SF-reading career started auspiciously with the discovery of Lord of the Rings, at the age of thirteen, and immense disappointment because I hadn't discovered it three years earlier when I read *The Hobbit*. After that I followed the 'comparable to Tolkien' tags and read Eddison, Morris, Evangeline Walton (the choice was a lot better in those days), at which point I ran out of decent fantasy and started pretending I was really a parent so as to sneak into the childrens' library without embarrassment.

When I was nineteen I suddenly decided that someone else must be reading all those books in the shops so I set out to look for them, and met the Oxford University SF Group, legendary for producing such luminaries as Dave Langford and others too numerous to mention. And through them I met CUSFS and Jomsborg, and joined The Women's Periodical, eventually becoming administrator for a year. I was briefly involved with Oxcon, the 1984 Unicon, and served on the committee of Mexicon 2.

I'm currently working on the programme for Novacon 16, working on the fannish sub-committee of Conspiracy, the 1987 Worldcon, contributing to Franks and The Organisation, as well as TWP, and my soft toys write for Get Stuffed. I am also one of the two most southerly members of the Dundee SF Group (don't ask, it's too complicated). I guess you could say I'm a pretty active fan at the moment.

My contribution to the BSFA so far has been reviewing for Paperback Inferno and Vector, but obviously editing Matrix represents a much greater commitment and gives me a chance to work on the Committee for the membership.

My role as editor is to assemble all the news and information provided into a coherent, readable form. On the other hand I don't believe in just sitting here waiting for the material to roll in. At best it drifts in gently from time to time, at worst it just doesn't arrive at all. So I'm going out looking for the news, following up hints and rumours, making enquiries, actively soliciting articles and reviews from people, aided by my trusty contributing editors.

I guess that's all you really need to know about me at present except that my weak points are cats, Alan Garner, Peter Gabriel and children's literature, not necessarily in that order.

NEWS

DAVE HODSON/PAUL KINCAID/MAUREEN PORTER
(with a little help from Locust, Ansible, and other nameless sources)

Some of you may already have heard that the artist Chesley Bonestell, a pioneer of space art, died on June 11, 1986, aged 98.

He started life as an architect but at the age of 50 became a special effects painter for Hollywood movies, providing realistic backgrounds, buildings and perspective shots for such movies as *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* (1939) and *CITIZEN KANE*, to name but two.

At the age of 56 he embarked on a second career as a space expert, producing numerous paintings of space scenes, future war, the Earth from space and so on, providing covers for *ASTOUNDING* and *GALAXY* as well as material for *LIFE* and *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*.

He also collaborated with Robert Heinlein to produce the first realistic space film, *DESTINATION MOON*, which won an Oscar for special effects and provided backgrounds for *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE*, *WAR OF THE WORLDS*, and *THE CONQUEST OF SPACE*. He also collaborated on book projects with Willy Ley, Werner von Braun, Arthur C Clarke and others.

He was awarded a special Hugo in 1974 for his achievements.

The winner of the DUFF ballot (The Down Under Fan Fund, dedicated to transporting selected fans between Australia and America, much as TAFF functions between the UK and the USA) has been announced, except that 'winners' is more appropriate. The artist collective consisting of Lewis Morley, Marilyn Pride and Mick Stathopoulos will be going to Confederation this year, something of a precedent as the fan funds are usually intended for a individual rather than a group.

I have received a letter from Sheila M Powis concerning a new monthly magazine of poetry and short stories that she has recently started publishing. She hasn't given me a title for this magazine but otherwise the details are as follows, quoting from her letter:

"All published contributions attract a fee but I have to ask that all work has an SAE as I am working to a very tight budget. The magazine aims to provide a showcase for new talent but established writers are also very welcome to contribute. A short piece about each writer new to the magazine will appear with published works.

Each volume will be linked to a theme, and those for the first few issues are: Transport; Sun, Sea, Sand; Jewels, Rocks, Stones; Murder, Mystery and Suspense; so items on these will be initially more successful. A further list of themes is available for editions after October.

For anyone interested in subscribing to this magazine, the cover price is £1.00 but until 1 November 1986, the subscription is £10.00 p.a. There is an associated Circle for writers and poets which costs £3.00 p.a., and if you would like details of your society, competitions, courses, etc included I would be very grateful to receive details. There is no charge for newsletter items and Circle members can use the magazine to request help with research etc. free."

If you are interested, please contact Mrs Sheila Powis, Muddelcombe Court, P O Box 108, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1AA

The **FICTION MAGAZINE** short story competition has a first prize of £250 and guaranteed publication in the magazine and the **FABER INTRODUCTION 10** anthology. Closing date is August 29th, and entry forms can be found in the current issue (or try The Fiction Magazine, 12/13 Clerkenwell green, London EC1). Apart from the entry form the current issue of **FICTION MAGAZINE** (Vol.6, no.6 August 1986) contains a memoir by Christopher Priest about the Beatles. You can't miss it - it's conveniently next to the entry form.

BOOK NEWS

TAPPAN KING is the new editor of **TWILIGHT ZONE** following the sacking of **MICHAEL BALINE** in May.

IAN WATSON has sold two novels, **WHORES OF BABYLON**, based upon the story **WE REMEMBER BABYLON** to **GRAFTON** (still better known as Granada) and **QUEENMAGIC**, **KINGMAGIC** which is due from **GOLLANZCZ** in September, with the first third appearing as an independent novella in **F&SF**. **GOLLANZCZ** will also publish his collection **EVIL WATERS AND OTHER STORIES** in Spring 1987.

JODY SCOTT (author of *Passing for Human*) will be visiting England in September to promote **THE WOMEN'S PRESS** edition of **I, VAMPIRE**, and also to attend **FANTASYCON** (see the convention listings in this issue).

CHILDREN OF THE DUST, the post-holocaust novel for children by **LOUISE LAWRENCE** has been shortlisted for the Library Association's Carnegie Medal, their annual award for an outstanding work for children published during the preceding year.

MALCOLM EDWARDS has purchased an SF novel from John Brosnan on the strength of a story outline.

GOLLANZCZ are to publish a new novel from **GENE WOLFE** in October. Called **SOLDIER OF**

THE MIST and set in Ancient Greece, it will be the first world edition. It's also the first part of a new fantasy sequence.

MACDONALD are to hardcover **KIM STANLEY ROBINSON's ICEHENGE** before the end of the year.

UNDERWOOD-MILLER: December sees the release of a 3 volume set called **THE COLLECTED STORIES OF PHILIP K DICK**. The first 400 will be slipcased and numbered. The first 100 will contain a tipped-in signature from one of Dick's cheques. These will sell for an astronomical \$350. The other 300 will cost \$100 and will feature a three page insert with a synopsis of an unwritten alternate history novel called **THE ACTS OF PAUL**. The ordinary trade edition will cost \$80.

The **PHILIP K DICK** publishing bonanza continues. Another of his long-unpublished novels, **THE MAN WHOSE TEETH WERE ALL EXACTLY ALIKE**, receives its first UK publication from **PALADIN** in August, whilst **GOLLANZCZ** follows up with **HUMPTY DUMPTY IN OAKLAND** in October.

GARRY KILWORTH's first mainstream novel, **WITCHWATER COUNTRY** is due from **BODLEY HEAD** this month. He also has a slim volume of poetry, **TREE MESSIAH** available from **ENVOI POETS** (Pen Ffordd, Newport, Dyfed).

GEOFF RYMAN's BSFA Award-winning story, **THE UNCONQUERED COUNTRY** is out in a slightly revised book length edition from **ALLEN & UNWIN THIS MONTH**.

Also available from **ALLEN & UNWIN** in August is **COLIN GREENLAND's** second novel, **THE HOUR OF THE THIN OX**, while in September they are publishing **SECOND NATURE** by **CHERRY WILDER**.

BRIAN ALDISS's excuse for missing Mexican 2, **TRILLION YEAR SPREE** (his revision of **BILLION YEAR SPREE** with former Vector editor, David Wingrove) is to be published in October by **GOLLANZCZ** in simultaneous hardback and paperback. He is also working on a new mainstream novel to be called **WHITE HALL**.

On the other hand, **IAIN BANKS**, author of *The Vasp Factory* and *Walking on Glass*, promises that his next novel, probably due in 1987, will be straight science fiction. In the meantime, try **THE BRIDGE**, which is anything but mainstream.

The second selection in the **GOLLANZCZ CLASSIC SF** paperback line, due this September, is: **THE CITY AND THE STARS** by **ARTHUR C CLARKE**, **THE DOOR INTO SUMMER** by **ROBERT HEINLEIN**, **THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM**

by JOHN SLADEK, and a newly revised edition of *WOLFBANE* by FRED POHL and C M KORNBLOTH.

M J HARRISON is currently working on two new novels, a fantasy called *THE COURSE OF THE HEART* which he calls a counter-Viriconium, and a mainstream novel called *CLIMBERS* about his favourite pastime, rock climbing.

CHARLES PLATT, critic and scourge of the SF world, is the author of a new book called *HOW TO BE A HAPPY CAT*, produced with the cartoonist GRAY JOLLIFF

The hardcover book line being set up by US publishers ACE will begin in September with GORDON R DICKSON'S *THE FOREVER MAN* and *THE DRAGON IN THE SWORD* by MICHAEL MOORCOCK

Let's take a slightly different approach to listing upcoming UK books ...

July releases:

Grafton have *DANCING WITH MERMAIDS* by MILES GIBSON, They also have *A DARKNESS AT SETHANOW*, by RAYMOND FEIST, published simultaneously in hard cover and paperback, the climax of *THE RIFTWAR SAGA* which began with *MAGICIAN* and continued into *SILVERTHORN* - yes, it's another fantasy trilogy which is supposed to be exciting, stunning, etc, etc.

PENGUIN give us *DRAGONS OF THE AUTUMN TWILIGHT*, volume 1 of *THE DRAGONLANCE CHRONICLES* by MARAGRET WEISS and TRACY HICKMAN, and based upon an extended Dungeons and Dragons campaign; and *THE PENGUIN WORLD OMNIBUS OF SCIENCE FICTION*, edited by BRIAN ALDISS and SAM J LUNDWALL.

August releases:

SPHERE release *TRUMPS OF DOOM* by ROGER ZELAZNY, book 6 of the *AMBER* series.

NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY inflicts ROBERT B VARDEMAN upon the UK in the shape of *THE KEYS TO PARADISE*, a futuristic fantasy of five keys, scattered through a realm of supernatural happenings, strange creatures and other-worldly powers. Another B-format paperback which means an X-rated price of £3.95.

NEL also have NICK FARREN'S *CORPSE: NICK SHARMAN'S YOU'RE NEXT*, and a re-issue of *SPACE CADET* by ROBERT HEINLEIN.

PIERS ANTHONY-mania continues with *OF MAN AND MANTA*, an omnibus volume containing *OMNIVORE*, *OX* and *ORW*, from CORGI at £4.95.

FUTURA start their now annual SF promotion this month featuring *JERUSALEM FIRE* by R M MELUCH, billed as 'a splendid mélange of violence and high fantasy, with warrior priests, sentient birds and intergalactic mayhem'; *LIMITS* by LARRY NIVEN, a short story collection; FRED POHL'S *THE MERCHANT WAR*, the sequel to Pohl and Kornbluth's *THE SPACE MERCHANTS*; and *TENNISON TARB*, which sounds like a paranoia trip from the blurb; *TAILCHASER'S SONG* by TAD WILLIAMS, a fantasy which aims to do for pussycats what *WATERSHIP DOWN* did for ickle bunnies, with a ginger tom called Tailchaser going on a quest for his best friend Hushpad and encountering a sinister cat-god; *THE SULTAN'S TURRET* by SEAMUS CULLEN, a sequel to *A NOOSE OF LIGHT: A TAPESTRY OF TIME*, the conclusion to RICHARD COWPER'S enchanting *WHITE BIRD OF KINSHIP* trilogy, which began with *THE ROAD TO CORLEY* and *A DREAM OF KINSHIP*; *VENGEANCE OF THE DANCING GODS* by JACK L CHALKER; MICHAEL COWEY'S *THE CELESTIAL STEAM LOCOMOTIVE* and various other *FUTURA* back catalogue titles.

FUTURA have also announced three titles for the *ORBIS* imprint in September. They are *FLIGHT OF HONOUR* by RICHARD McEWROB, which is described as the second volume of the *FAR STARS* and *FUTURE TIMES* series; *THE DOOR IN THE HEDGE* by ROBIN MCKINLEY (triff stuff, this one - MSP); and *PHOENIX IN THE ASHES* by JOAN D VINGE.

ARROW give us the entertaining MIKE RESNICK with *SANTIAGO*, tongue-in-cheek as usual; and *WAYLANDER* by DAVID GEMWELL - more best selling fantasy.

July/August hardcovers include STEPHEN DONALDSON'S *THE MIRROR OF HER DREAMS* from COLLINS.

GOLLANCZ offers *THE SONGS OF DISTANT EARTH* by (gasp) ARTHUR C CLARKE (Sol has gone nova, mankind has been evacuated in huge sleepships, one of which lands on the planet Thalassa for repairs), *BURNING CHROME* by WILLIAM GIBSON (a short fiction collection, including some collaborations), and KEITH ROBERTS' *THE LORDLY ONES* (mistyped last issue as *The Unlikely Ones*).

The new SF and fantasy specialist publisher KEROSINA, publishers of *KARTI AND COMPANY*, which featured in the last *Vector*, have announced their next two books. *SHADES OF DARKNESS* is by RICHARD COWPER and should be available in late 1986, whilst *GRAINER* by KEITH ROBERTS will see print in Spring '87/ Limited, signed editions as well as trade hardcover editions of each title will be published.

CONSPIRACY

The Fan Room

One of the most notable features of British conventions - especially to foreign fans - are the Fan Rooms and Fan Programmes. First tried out in 1975, and coming to full fruition in 1977, they have become a major factor in the interest and entertainment of British fannish fans. As the premier British convention of the Eighties, CONSPIRACY has already begun the trek towards bringing you the best fanroom and fan programme we can muster.

All our facilities are in the Metropole, and comprise a large fan room which will have its own bar and lounge area, a separate but adjacent programme room, and a fanzine workshop and repro room which will be also be handling the convention's daily newsletter. The fan room, bossed by Greg Pickersgill and Pam Wells, will be the centre for socialising; as well as the bar and lounge area (equipped with a unique "cafe society" section) there will be sales tables offering a range of fanzines new and old, convention memorabilia, and whatever interesting junk we can otherwise acquire. Also in it, as well as filling the short corridor connecting the bar/lounge and fan programme room, will be convention information, fan group details, displays and layouts of events and history, all masterminded by Christina Lake and Peterfred Thompson, even now busy collecting things to line the walls for the idle (and even the busy) to gawp at. Tribute will be paid in both the displays and the programme items to the fact that CONSPIRACY coincides with the 50th anniversary of SF cons in the UK - fifty years since the fannish fans did first did something for the SF readers to attend. Expect to see some remarkable "Blast from the Past" photo-spreads featuring many people who have since donned the mantle of ultra-respectability.

Recognising that nothing perks up convention spirits as much as a good shouting match, Martin Tudor has come up with the theme of "Contention" as a seed for his programme ideas, and is scouting the UK, Europe and the rest of the world for items to get up people's noses. Note - that "rest of the world" is important; too often have fan programmers, especially in the USA, forgotten that fandom exists all over the world and

that fannish concepts, although often similar, are by no means identical.

Rob Hansen will be overseeing what promises to be a stunning range of special publications which will be on offer at the sales table, and Maureen Porter is liaising with the Fan Guests of Honour and quite likely will be supervising the convention newsletter which will be run off on whatever super-tech computerised kit we can encourage someone to demonstrate in the repro room.

We will be setting up a Video Box to record opinion and anecdote throughout the convention, and will also be sending a team of video pryors around the place (the public parts of it anyway) finding out those things most people would rather be left unrecorded.

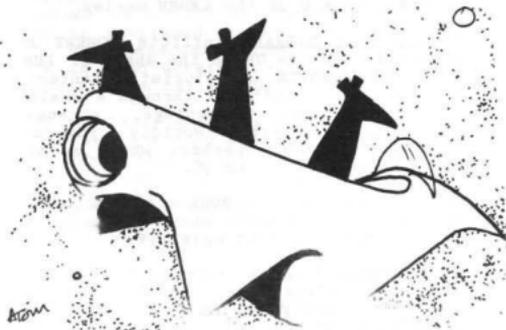
These points are only the front end of the Conspiracy fan programme. no fan room or programme can come together or function properly without the assistance of all who might use it, both before and during the convention. "During" comes later, but we would like your help right now with the "before" part.

If you would like to help with the Fan Room in general, or with the Video Box, please contact Linda Pickersgill, 7a Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London W5 4XJ

All information on Fan Groups and Conventions should be channelled through Pam Wells, 24a Beech Road, Boves Park, London, N11 2DA

If you have fanzines you would like other to have, either for fixed price sale, auction or to give away, please contact Greg Pickersgill, address as for Linda.

Just remember, to make this work and be really enjoyable we need you more than you need us.



An Appeal

This appeal is made to all fans everywhere on behalf of Eduard Maarkov, who is a fan stuck in the USSR and desperate to leave there.

Eduard is fluent in English as well as Russian, and he is expert in the field of both Eastern and Western science fiction and fantasy. He has written a number of as yet unpublished works and has translated many SF books and stories from English into Russian.

He, his wife Ludmilla and his son Sergei first applied to leave the USSR in 1979, they were refused and have been constantly denied permission to go since then. The reason given was that the invitation to go to Israel did not come from a close enough relative. This is clearly just an excuse as his sister lives in the West.

He is now desperately worried because his son has reached the age when he may be called up for military service. If this should occur it will be used as an excuse to deny a visa to leave almost indefinitely. The physical risk is an additional reason for worry.

Eduard was dismissed from his job in the field of energy engineering when he applied to leave the USSR. Since that time he has been forced to work in only the most dangerous, unpleasant and poorest paid positions.

Eduard wants to go to the West so that he may live in freedom and pursue a career in uncensored writing. He wants a chance to get his books published and to live a life free of threats and continual harassment.

He has heard of the SF community in the West. He has heard how this community helps its members. He has asked that a direct appeal be made to you fans to help.

You can help in a number of ways: -

1. By writing to him at:

USSR
RSFSR
Leningrad 196340
Kostyushko 10
Apt 67
MARKOV, Eduard

2. By writing and complaining of his treatment and urging the Soviets to relent to:

Leonid Zamyatin
Soviet Ambassador
Soviet Embassy
18 Kensington Palace gardens
London W8

3. By registering him and his family for conventions and asking them to attend.
4. By inviting him to speak or take part in a convention.

Anything you do will help. Do not feel that you will make Eduard's situation any worse because he has already been made a non-person in Soviet society.

If you wish for more information or if you are willing to do either 3 or 4 of the above, please contact Dov Rigal, 68 Eden Road, London, E17 9JY. Telephone 01-521 1153(home) or 01-831 2776(work)

I received a copy of the above appeal when I was at the The Tun the other week. I think it is important that this is brought to the attention of all members of the BSFA, and indeed to as many members of British fandom as possible. We are very fortunate, however we may view the situation, to live in what is basically a free society. As such, I feel it is important to lend as much support as possible to those who are not free in ways we would recognise, which is why I am printing this appeal in Matrix. This is, I add, my personal choice to do so, and not a policy decision by the BSFA. Neither is this a political issue, and I very much hope that it will not be interpreted as such. This is a matter of a man being denied basic human rights. It could have been one of us, it wasn't, which makes it even more important to lend our support. The article tells you what is needed and I hope that at least some of you will take some action.

I would be grateful if people would keep both Dov and myself informed of what they do and any response they may receive. At a risk of appearing to thrive on someone's misfortune I would like to maintain a watching brief for Matrix and keep everyone informed of developments.

THE PERIODIC TABLE

CONVENTION ROUNDUP

Slightly different set-up from now on in that I will not only be listing English conventions, but also key overseas conventions for those BSFA members who fancy taking in a convention whilst on holiday. Be warned that American cons aren't always quite like their English counterparts.

CONSEPT

Unicon 7 (or Un7con - any idea, why?)

8th-10th August 1986
University of Surrey, Guildford

Guest of Honour: Tanith Lee

Membership: Attending £8.00
Supporting £4.00

Send cheques/POs/etc payable to
"Consept:Un7con" to 9 Graham Road,
Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 5RP

RUBICON

22nd-25th August 1986

Chequers Hotel, Newbury, Berks

Membership: £5.00

Information from K Oborn, Bishops
Cottage, Park House Lane, Reading, RG3
2AH

KOANACON

22nd-25th August 1986
Warwick University

Guests of Honour: Dave Langford, Pete
Tamlyn

Information from Alex Zbyslaw, 123
Hollis Road, Stoke, Coventry, UK

CONFEDERATION

The 44th World SF Convention.

28th August - 1st September

Guest of Honour: Ray Bradbury
Fan Guest of Honour: Terry Carr
Toastmaster: Our very own Bob Shaw

Hilton Hotel/Towers Hotel, Atlanta,
Georgia.

I've no idea what it will cost on the
door and it's probably too late to book
by post anyway, but worth noting in case
you're in the area.

OXENMOOT 1986

The Tolkien Society's Annual Oxford
Meeting

19th-21 September 1986

UK Guest, and Hostess: Priscilla Tolkien

Information from Jenny Curtis, 35
Martindale Close, Leicester, LE2 7HH

POL'CON

The Polish National Convention

22nd-28th September 1986

Warsaw, Poland

Membership: Free to Western fans

Information from Richard Jasinski, 70
351 Szczecin, Ul. Bol. Smialego 14/26,
Poland.

FANTASYCON XI

The British Fantasy Society Annual
Convention

26th-28th September 1986

The Midland Hotel, Birmingham

Guest of Honour: Dennis Etchison
Special Guest: Jody Scott
M.C Samantha Lee

Membership: Attending £10.00
(BFS members £9.00)
Supporting £2.00

Send cheques/POs/etc, payable to
"Fantasycon" to Fantasycon XI, 15
Stanley Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DE.

Room rates: per person, per night,
£18.50

XIICON

Pronounced 'Sicon' (I think), it's the
12th Glasgow Convention

26th - 29th September, 1986
Central Hotel, Glasgow (where the
Eastercon was)

Guest of Honour: Harry Harrison

Membership: Attending £9
Supporting £3

Cheques/POs/etc, payable to "XIICON", to
S J Campbell, Beachfield, Calmuir Road,
Lenzie, Glasgow, G66 3JJ.

Room rates: Single per night £16.00
Twin/Double per person, per
night £13.50
Triple per person, per night
£13.00

NICON 86

The First Northern Ireland Science
Fiction Convention

26th October 1986

Students Union, Queen's University,
Belfast

Guest of Honour: Anne McCaffrey, James
White, plus Peter Morwood, Chris Boyce
Fan Guest of Honour: to be announced

Membership: Attending £2.00
Supporting £1.00

Send cheques/POs/etc, payable to
"Queen's Clubs and Societies", to Thomas
Ferguson, Science Fiction Society, c/o
QUB, SU Building, University Road,
Belfast, BT7 1PE

12th WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION

Apparently a con without a name

30th October - 2nd November 1986

Providence, Rhode Island, USA

Guests of Honour: Ramsey Campbell,
Charles L Grant, J K Potter

Membership: Attending \$45 (no at-the-
door memberships, size limit
750)
Supporting \$20

Information from 12th World Fantasycon,
Box 3251, Darlington Branch PO,
Pawtucket, RI 02861, USA.

NOVAICON 16

The Birmingham SF Group's Annual
Convention.

31st October - 2nd November 1986

De Vere Hotel, Coventry

Guest of Honour: E C 'Ted' Tubb
Special Guest: Chris Evans

Membership: £8.00 attending
£10.00 on the door

Send cheques/POs/etc, payable to
"Novacon 16" to Graham Poole, 86 Berwood
Farm Road, Wyde Green, Sutton
Coldfield, West Midlands.

Room rates: Single per night £21.50
Twin/double per night, per
person £16.50

I'd better declare that I have an
interest here - I'm doing the programme.
At the risk of sounding biased, it won't
be quite like any Novacon you've ever
seen before. On the warning in PR 1,
we're not so much promising to get heavy
as demonstrating to the hotel that we
have given a warning. They were not
happy, last year. All we really ask is
that people are discreet. End of
commercial.

STAR TREK PLATINUM ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION

15th-16th November 1986

Guests of Honour include Gene
Roddenberry, George Takei, Diane Duane
and many more.

The rates are too complicated to
summarise here but information to be had
from Platinum Anniversary Convention,
Box 6838, Broad & Water PO, Boston, MA
02102, USA.

CONCEPTION

A celebration of the 50th anniversary of
the first ever SF convention, held in
Leeds in 1937.

13th-15th February 1987
Queen's Hotel, Leeds

(This is a correction - there is no
Grand Hotel in Leeds, only wishful
thinking on John's part about relocating
Novacons)

Membership: Attending £6.00

Send cheques/POs/etc, payable to
"Conception", to 12 Fearnville Terrace,
Oakwood, Leeds, LS8 3DU

CORFLU 4

20th-22nd February 1987

Cincinnati, Ohio

Information from Bill Bowers, 2468
Harrison Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45211,
USA

ORICON

6th-8th March, Essex (anywhere in
particular in Essex?)

Membership: £12.00 plus 3 SASEs

Send cheques/POs/etc to 66 Burdett Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, SS) 7JW

CAPCON

1987 Australian National SF Convention

18th-20th April 1987 (MOVED from 25th-27th April)
Queanbeyan, ACT, Australia

Guests of Honour: Robert Asprin & Lynn Abbey
Fan Guest of Honour: John Newman

Membership: Attending: A\$25 in advance,
A\$30 at the door
Supporting: A\$5

Information from Capcon, PO Box 312, Fyshwick, 2609 ACT, Australia

BCCON '87

The 1987 Eastercon

25th-27th April 1987
Metropole Hotel, NEC, Birmingham

Guest of Honour: Keith Roberts
Fan Guest of Honour: still to be announced

Membership: Attending £10
Supporting £5

Note that these rates will go up by £1 somewhere at the end of September

Send cheques/POs/etc, payable to "Beccon", to Beccon '87, 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex.

MYTHCON XVIII

Mythopoeic Conference. Theme: Tolkien Retrospective

14th-27th July, 1987
Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

I can't fathom the membership rates from the advert I've seen so write for further information to Mythcon XVIII, c/o John D Ratcliff, Conference Secretary, 628 N 117th Street #2, Milwaukee, WI 53233, USA.

I think this is the conference of the Mythopoeic Society, with fairly strong academic emphasis. And if anyone knows how to pronounce it ...?

CONSPIRACY '87

The 45th World SF Convention (the first in Britain since 1979)

22nd August - 1st September 1987
Metropole Hotel & Brighton Centre, Brighton (surprise, surprise)

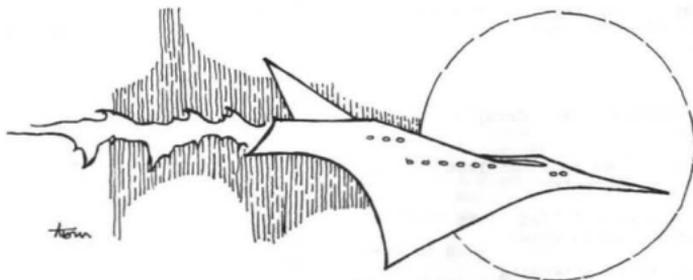
Guests of Honour: Doris Lessing, Alfred Bester, Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, Jim Burns

Fan Guests of Honour: Ken and Joyce Slater, Dave Langford

Toastmaster: Brian Aldiss

Membership: Attending £25 (children 8-14 £12.50)
Supporting £10

These rates will go up on 2nd September so get your application in quick.



ALBACON III The Con Report

by Nicholas Mahoney

Albacon III in my view was a total success.

Being only my second convention I always felt I knew how to get more out of it than my previous convention so I can't compare enjoyment. Actually, if the last two are anything to go by, then I wish I could afford to go to more conventions. For a student they are a touch pricey. I'm continually updating calculations as to how much the Worldcon is going to cost me, and coming to the dreary conclusion that it will be half a grant cheque, whichever way you look at it.

At Albacón, to economise, I avoided hotel food (it is possible) but most others didn't and sang its praises. Bar prices were something I could relate to, and I indulged as much as my overdraft would allow. The book room was huge. For non-convention goes out there, it is the best place to try and get that book you have never been able to find. For me, it was a good place to inflict GBH on my bank account.

The films? *Bladerunner* was good, as ever, but *Cocoon* was the big surprise. I saw the title and thought 'this is gonna be crap'. It wasn't. I enjoyed it from beginning to end and was fascinated by the audience reaction. In the film a few old people become increasingly energetic, to the point where one becomes a breakdance sensation at a disco. The Albacón audience applauded him. The atmosphere watching the films was something I've never experienced in a cinema, as a result the level of enjoyment was much higher.

I always find the panels fascinating, there is such a wide range of subjects, and so often put forward so enthusiastically that there simply has to be something for everyone. I could go on for pages about them. I never felt tempted to try the fan programme so I can hardly say anything about that.

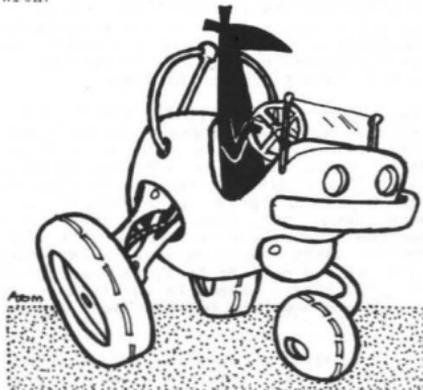
Throughout the whole convention I felt at home almost to the point of becoming an extrovert and that, believe me, is saying something! All I needed to do to find a friend was to simply strike up a conversation with the nearest available person. With your pet subject as untrodden ground it was a cinch. Only I wasn't fully aware how universally that applied until something particularly memorable happened.

I was waiting around for the BSFA awards to be handed out after sitting through a load of lunatic games. The hotel team had won somewhat suspiciously, this event being the most forgettable of the whole weekend. All of a sudden the celebrities started walking in. Five minutes later, Joe Haldeman had sat down next to me and we eventually struck up a conversation.

I collected my wits and found that he hadn't read the award nominations, so I gave him my opinion of the novels as best I could and had the horrible sensation I could quite possibly be boring him. I also found Clive Barker eminently approachable. I took up a book to be signed and he immediately made me feel at ease with an enthusiast 'Hi there'.

Among the highlights of the weekend were the GOH speech and Barker's guest speech. I was hoping they'd be in *Matrix* but alas ... Barker started off by saying that he was nervous but inspired a thousand souls with his enthusiasm (well, not quite that many were there, but it was that good). Haldeman's question and answer routine was interesting and contained the following 'What do I think of reviewers? Well, what does a fire hydrant think of dogs?' On the same subject, Barker produced 'Don't even ignore them.'

Where science fiction fans are concerned, conventions should be prescribed by the NHS as a cure for depression. I came home vibrant with ideas and enough motivation and enthusiasm to write a few semi-decent stories. So much happened in the space of four days that it took me weeks to get rid of the anecdotes. I left for the train with a feeling that, as unwilling as I was to let it end, I had to leave to have some normal life to compare it with.



MEDIA REVIEWS

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

(adapted by Liz Brailsford, with music by Andrew Dickson, from the novel by Ray Bradbury)

Performed at the Everyman Theatre, Liverpool, 15th May - 21st June, 1986.

Reviewed by Stephen R Ealey

Let's talk about secret dreams and Hallowe'en and dinosaurs and boys with wild imaginations. Yes, we are in Ray Bradbury country, Illinois, and sure enough, something sinister is about to happen.

Jim Nightshade and Will Halloway are almost fourteen. They are riding easy in the reins, jogging along, waiting for Hallowe'en - but this year Hallowe'en comes early. Their languid autumn is shattered by the arrival of Cooger and Dark's Carnival, and the carousel which can make your secret dream come true.

This adaptation of Bradbury's 1963 novel opens with a recital of its evocative prologue and from then on faithfully adheres to the original story, the only minor deviation occurring at the end of the play. Very few SF and fantasy stories have been adapted for the stage, for obvious reasons, but this is an excellent example of what can be achieved with limited resources.

There are no dazzling special effects, and scenery and props are kept to a minimum. Two pairs of step ladders give sterling service as houses, library stacks and a hot air balloon; the lightning-rod salesman jangles an imaginary sack of metalwork and a large umbrella covered with tin foil (along with the inevitable stepladders) makes a colourful carousel. An already extended imagination has no trouble visualising the freaks and horrors of the carnival as they cavort around the stage.

The actors played all the music live, and they appeared to enjoy hugely their total involvement in the production. Barry Birch (as Jim) and Ben Daniels (Will) made brave attempts to capture the boys who 'grew up overnight, and were never so young any more' but perhaps they were a little too old. Special mention must be given to Matthew Zajac as the evil Mr Dark, who delighted in his sudden appearances from trap doors, and who stalked ominously around the stage.

I must confess to a certain indifference concerning Ray Bradbury's work. Many

years ago I enjoyed his collections *R is for Rocket* and *S is for Space*, but then I read *The Small Assassin*, his horror/fantasy collection, which put me off reading anything further. That is, until I read *Something Wicked This Way Comes* before going to see the play. I enjoyed both.

The question is, would a Liverpool audience, perhaps sated on a diet of *Star Wars*, *Legend* and *Knight Rider* appreciate a production which required it to use its imagination rather than presenting it with spectacular effects to admire. Unfortunately, on the night I saw the play, the auditorium was only half full. However, the encouragingly young audience seemed to enjoy every minute and gave the company a good reception.

The Ray Bradbury Theatre: Marionettes Inc

Based on the story by Ray Bradbury

Starring: James Coco, Leslie Nelson
Directed by: Paul Lynch
Produced by: Seton McLean

Broadcast: 9th June, Yorkshire TV (30 mins)

Reviewed by Terry Broome

John Braling has an overly helpful wife who can't stop talking. His life has become a boring routine. Then he arrives at work to find an advertisement for Marionettes Inc on his personal computer. Everywhere he goes he is assailed by their business cards and their company motto 'We Shadow Forth'. They seem to know everything about him, right down to the way he thinks. Persuaded by a colleague to visit the company, he meets Fantochini, the proprietor, (played by Leslie Nelson, best known for his role in *Police Squad*). Knowing that Braling lives a sad and unhappy life, he offers him a new start.

After some high-pressure selling, Braling accepts and an android replica takes his place at home whenever he wishes to be away. Meanwhile his colleague has discovered that Braling's wife is also a marionette and has spent all his money. The scene ends with the marionette ominously opening its eyes as the man bends over it.

At the same time, Braling is finding his replica to be an improvement on him in every way, and it has started to do things that he would never do. It isn't doing as Marionettes Inc would like and it doesn't want to go back to the factory. It is enjoying its new life too much, and when Braling confronts it, the

marionette refuses to get back into its box. After a brief fight, Braling himself is sealed into the box, and the replica resumes its life with Braling's wife.

Coco is an excellent choice to play Braling, but Nelson steals the scenes when they appear together. Indeed, Nelson's Fantochini is a very quirky character and a delightful interpretation, though I couldn't quite make up my mind as whether or not he overdid it. There is a fine line between a good portrayal of a sinister character or ham acting.

In the story, Marionettes Inc is not particularly sinister. The company requires a mould for any character they replicate, for example, and their motto proclaims 'No Strings Attached'. The whole story is jokily written, the final scene where the marionette confesses to having feelings and seems embarrassed to admit to loving Braling's wife (the epitome of a dragon) being particularly delightful. Other than that the two versions differ very little.

Marionettes Inc wasn't a particularly exciting production, but it passed the time.

FRIGHT NIGHT directed by Tom Holland

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD directed by Dan O'Bannon

REANIMATOR directed by Stuart Gordon

Reviewed by Colin Bird

For those of us enjoying a breather from the many recent limp science fiction films (*Cocoon*, *Lifeforce* etc) we can fill the gap with a number of satisfying horror films which signify a resurgence of quality in this under-rated genre. It is reminiscent of the 'new wave' directors of the mid-seventies who used the less stringent modern censorship to emphasise the primary aim of horror films, that is, to shock and terrify the viewer. The more recent films have traditional frameworks within which to present the frights and the lack of allusions to social criticism allows the directors the freedom to exploit the many facets of terror. These three films are all refreshingly devoid of pretension and also benefit from a sense of self-effacing humour that big budget science-fiction efforts (*Blade Runner*, *Dune*, *Lifeforce*, etc) sorely lack.

Of the three, *Fright Night* is, to me, the least successful despite doing very respectable box-office business in the States. It has by far the bigger budget and this is very evident from the slick presentation. Tom Holland's script

suffers from the everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach. The finale is stretched to include a variety of spectacular special effects allowing the viewer to become distanced from the action. *Fright Night* is by no means a failure, the performances are uniformly excellent, especially Chris Sarandon as the funky vampire who exudes charismatic potency but suffers from a bad case of sunburn. Holland sticks closely to the hallowed principles of vampire lore which, by now, most of us have forgotten in the wake of endless movies which have shown much less respect for the dead (or should that be undead!). This vampire can change his victims into hounds, turn himself into a bat quicker than you can say 'Louma Crane' and he develops a strong vegetarian streak when someone mentions a steak.

H P Lovecraft is not the kind of writer you would expect modern horror audiences to appreciate, but director Stuart Gordon has revitalised an old series of stories called 'Herbert West, The Re-Animator', and the result is a gore-splattered slice of tongue-in-cheek that old H P would be proud of. The story concerns the discovery of a serum which re-animates corpses and gives them the appearance of life. Dr West arrives with a fridge full of the serum and promptly persuades a medical student to join him in an attempt to prove the serum's worth. Unfortunately, it succeeds far beyond their expectations, and things get rapidly worse.

Re-Animator is an enjoyable romp, sensibly played as much for laughs as for chills. There are several ludicrous scenes involving a headless corpse and an exciting conclusion that features Herbert West doing battle with a length of intestines! Gordon loses his grip somewhat with the ending, similar in theme to Stephen King's *Pet Sematery*, but not so much as to spoil an excellent film.

The most adventurous of the three films, and easily the best, is Dan O'Bannon's *Return of the Living Dead*. This is a black comedy which takes all the clichés of Horror, and then pushes them to extremes.

The story is basic stuff. An old chemical weapon is stored by mistake at a medical suppliers, the obliging caretakers release it and a corpse is infected. The corpse comes back to life and gets a pick through the brain for his troubles. However, this corpse did not see *Night of the Living Dead* and is unaffected by the efforts. The hysterical reactions of the bemused re-animators is hilarious - 'maybe you missed', says one. They finally decide

to dismember the zombie and incinerate the corpse, but the burning flesh produces a cloud of the chemical which settles on the nearby graveyard. A small group of locals caught up in the incident hole up in the mortuary and begin to succumb.

Although there is a sense of panic evident throughout this film, the story seeming to overrun the film-makers such as the zombies do civilisation, the pace and twisted humour ensure a novel approach to a previously jaded plot device. There are several references to Romero's pioneering 'Dead' but *Return of the Living Dead* has a flavour very much its own. I especially enjoyed the sight of increasingly stronger police rescue attempts being quashed by a mass of zombies which seemed to appear from nowhere.

The Comics Page

EAGLE AWARDS

The 1986 Eagle Awards were announced at the June Comic Con in Birmingham and featured a nearly clean sweep by Mexican guest Alan Moore. Apart from winning the **Best Writer** categories for both the UK and the US, Alan's work was voted top in the following categories:

Favourite Comic Book (US), Favourite Supporting Character (US), Favourite New Title (US), Favourite Character (UK), Character Most Worthy of Own Title (UK) and Favourite Continued Story (UK). He was also elected to the Roll of Honour, an honour he shares with the likes of Jack Kirby, Will Eisner and Stan Lee.

The full results were as follows:

US Categories:

Favourite Artist (Penciller): George Perez
 Favourite Artist (Inker): Terry Austin
 " " Writer: Alan Moore
 " " Comic Book: Swamp Thing
 Favourite Graphic Novel: American Flag - Hard Times
 Favourite Character: Batman
 " " Group or Team: X-Men
 " " Villain: Anti-Monitor
 " " Supporting Character: John Constantine - Swamp Thing
 Character Most Worthy of Own Title: Wolverine
 Favourite Single or Continued Story: Crisis on Infinite Earths #1-9
 Favourite New Title: Miracleman
 " " Comic Book Cover: Swamp Thing #34
 Favourite Specialist Comics Publication: Amazing Heroes

UK Categories

Favourite Artist: Alan Davis
 " " Writer: Alan Moore
 " " Comic: 2000 AD
 " " Comic Album: Nemesis Book 3
 " " Character: Halo Jones
 " " Villain: Torquemada
 " " Supporting Character: Meggan - Captain Britain
 Character Most Worthy of Own Title: Halo Jones
 Favourite Single or Continuing Story: Halo Jones Book 2 (2000 AD #406-415)
 " " New Comic: Captain Britain
 " " Comic Book Cover: Captain Britain
 Favourite Specialist Comics Publication: Speakeasy
 Roll of Honour: Alan Moore

SPIRIT TV MOVIE

A pilot TV movie of Will Eisner's *THE SPIRIT* is currently filming in the United States. Made for ABC by Warner Brothers Television, the film features **SAM JONES** (of FLASH GORDON fame) as the 'Wildwood Detective', with **NANA VISITOR** as Ellen Dolan and **GARRY WALBERG** as Commissioner Dolan. The script is by Steven De Souza and is based upon Eisner's post-war strips. Another 1940's comic book character being transferred to the small screen is Jerry Iger's *ACE OF THE NEWSREEL*.

MORE MOORCOCK ADAPTATIONS FROM FIRST COMICS

Joining the regular *ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ* and *HAWKMOON* adaptations from First Comics is *THE CHRONICLES OF CORON* (which are actually the best of Moorcock's S&S novels, in the humble opinion of this writer - DH), to be written by **MIKE BARON** and drawn by **MIKE MIGNOLA** and **RICK BURCHETT**.

Rob Gregg has also passed on some pieces of information:

DETECTIVE 567 contains a Batman story penned by Harlan Ellison.

The Batman 400 is a special 64-page no ads issue with an array of guest writers and pencillers, plus an intro by Stephen King.

Fantastic Four 296 is the 25th Annish and features the return of Stan Lee himself.

COMPETITION CORNER

There were six entries this time, from Stephen R Ealey, Martin Hewitson, Nicholas Mahoney, Kevin Mcveigh, Phil Nichols, and Dave Wood. An interesting selection of nominees included: The Stainless Steel Rat (twice), Marvin the Paranoid Android, the Ticktockman, Zarathustra, Paul Atreides, and God. (And yes, some people entered more than once).

The winner of this, my last competition, is PHIL NICHOLS, for his short, pithy manifesto in support of Hari Seldon:

Vote Seldon. He will:

- Play absolutely no part in the running of the Association;
- Allow the Association to continue its inexorable process of decay;
- Keep the membership totally in the dark;
- Put in a token appearance once every fifty years.

That says it all really, doesn't it?

Phil will be receiving a £5 book token.

Thank you to everyone who's entered my competitions, and I hope a few more of you have had some fun thinking about them at home. I'm now taking a rest for a few months, but be warned - I may be back!

Once more into the breach, dear friends, and may the Force be with you.

* * * * *

And all that remains for me to do is to thank Liz very much for all her hard work in providing the competitions over the last few issues of *Matrix*.

The competition column is going on holiday for the time being, although odd little competitions may emerge from time to time. The column will re-appear around the turn of the year, I hope. Unless, of course, howls of protest persuade me to do otherwise. Mind you, a showing of six out of eight hundred potential entries isn't exactly inspiring. We shall see.



WRITE BACK

The Letter Column

Perhaps I am just a natural-born pessimist but I honestly didn't expect to receive so immediate and so favourable a response to my plans for Matrix. I found it extremely encouraging. Okay so the egoboo was very welcome, but it also demonstrated that a lot of you are willing to put pen to paper. The number of new names among the correspondents was especially heartening. I shall be expecting to see

lots more newcomers in future letter-columns.

As a little incentive next time around, for the first new person to write into the letter column there will be a FREE book. By 'new' I mean that your name should not have appeared in the last five lettercols of Matrix.

I think a few words on my editorial policy so far as the letter column is concerned wouldn't hurt. I will print whatever you write, but I reserve the right to shorten, edit or use extracts as necessary. I am not suggesting you keep letters short but it helps if you present your thoughts clearly and concisely. At the same time, enigmatic one-sentence statements with no word of explanation are little help either so please make sure that I know what you're saying. You don't have to type your letter, but neat handwriting helps. Make sure that you print your name and address legibly somewhere on the letter - please!

I've realised that some people expect a personal reply as well as having their letter printed. Sorry but you're being greedy. It simply is not possible for me to respond personally to every letter that I receive as Matrix editor. So, much as I appreciate the thoughtfulness of those who actually enclose SASEs, I'd prefer it if you didn't. I'll be in touch if necessary. Otherwise, your acknowledgement of receipt must either be seeing your letter in print or your name in the IAHF column.

I think we will pick up the thread of the SF music discussion with Kevin McVeigh's response to Patrick Lee's query from M64.

Kevin McVeigh
37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe,
Cumbria, LA7 7QF

In reply to Patrick Lee's comments, I hadn't noticed the link with Tears for Fears' *Everybody Wants to Rule the World* but I can see his point about the music from *Dune*, which was mainly written and performed by the American group Toto. As plagiarism is the norm in the pop scene it is not really possible to accuse TFF of taking from Toto as it may well be that Toto themselves got their ideas elsewhere.

The Art of Noise are, I believe, a duo who make welcome use of the synthesiser in a reasonably new fashion, the first to really do so since Klaus Schulze or Stomu Yamash'ta who did a lot to develop electronic music in the mid 70's. If it can still be found, an LP called *Stomu Yamash'ta's Go-Live from Paris* is well

worth listening to if you are a fan of SF-influenced music. Yamash'ta also provided all the music for the David Bowie/Nicholas Roeg film *The Man who Fell to Earth*.

Hussain Mohamed
124 Gloucester Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey, KT1 3QN

Kevin McVeigh raises a fascinating topic when he asks what music people choose to associate with SF. I have often read comments from readers asserting that rock music is the sound most often associated with SF. Is this true, and if so why? Because of Hawkwind and Moorcock, and Yes and Roger Dean? I personally think that there is as much connection between rock and SF as there is between Wagner and SF, i.e. none, everything or whatever you choose. I fail to see that there is an innate connection which often, judging by readers' comments, seems to be the consensus. Maybe it's just that I hate Rock! Jeez, prejudice against the seminal music of our time! I must be a reactionary old fuddy-duddy . . . Wonder what other people think?

Andy Mills
74 Hardy Street, Hull, North Humberside,
HU5 2PJ

I'm a fan of both [music and SF] but tend to see the two interests as separate entities. David Wingrove's recent article in *Vector* (on Yes!), and previous ones I've read, have yet to convince me that the two fields can be satisfactorily merge.

As far as I can see, there are four areas where SF music is claimed to exist. First, there are bands/tracks/albums with SF titles. This is often superficial - you can't claim that Duran Duran is an sf group or that *Sparks in Outer Space* is an SF album. Secondly, SF is often linked with electronic or progressive music. This is guilt by association, the synthesiser=hi-tech=futuristic. On the other end of the scale (pardon the pun) classical/orchestrated music used as SF film theme music would have no SF connotations at all were it not for that connection. Thirdly, music is most often claimed to be SF when the lyrics are obviously science-fictional. This is all very well except that it is often trite. If singing about space-ships makes SF music it doesn't necessarily make good SF or good music, just as the *Lensman* series isn't the acme of literature. However, there is a good deal of music around which deals with mature SF themes yet which is not claimed to be SF music. Fourthly, and most significantly, there

is the question of *taste*. People who like both SF and music tend to claim the connection for groups etc they like. David Wingrove's article on Yes, for instance, was obviously a labour of love. But to one who does not know or enjoy the music, it was not convincing. Can anyone look at the SF/music interface without falling into any of the above traps? I've not seen anybody do so thus far, but I would be delighted if it could be done.

Any offers? Contributions gratefully received, but I am not interested in items listing groups and songs without any critical analysis involved. And if you want to pass on lists of recommended music to one another, would you do it directly rather than through Matrix.

Time to move on to the more serious matter of what the BSFA in general, and Matrix in particular ought to be doing. Opinions vary, of course.

Rob Gregg

103 Highfield Road, Romford,
Essex, RM5 3AE

First of all, I'd like to thank John Harvey for the great job he did on M64, producing a fine issue in very difficult circumstances. Your *What Future for Matrix?* article was a refreshing introduction to what you're planning for the 'zine in future issues. It is good to have an editor who isn't afraid to look ahead and make radical changes. In my view *Matrix* could (and should) become the flagship of both the BSFA and fandom as a whole. Generally speaking, I like the sound of the changes you're planning, but I'll try not to expect too much too soon.

Although *Matrix* is the newsletter of the BSFA I agree that it should be far more than a newsletter. Every serious book collector receives the lists, reviewzines etc put out by the mail order SF companies, and it is pointless to duplicate this information by publishing endless lists of new releases in the pages of *Matrix*. The rest of the news coverage is fine, considering the bi-monthly schedule.

Apart from the spread of news the zine should concentrate on two main areas - reviews and discussion. A lively, extensive local is a must, and I hope all the fen who're idly sitting, whingeing about the BSFA, get off their butts and at least contribute to this section of the zine. I also rather like your ideas on fanzine reviews, as it'll provide a nice variety of reviews on the various zines around. However, with the dearth of Britzines it looks as though you'll only be covering US/Aussie zines!

I agree with Ken Lake - Guffstuff should go out to all BSFA members.

Whilst I agree that Matrix has to be far more than a news magazine I can't accept that disposing of the lists of new releases will serve any good. Too many people rely on them - whilst fans aren't always serious book collectors they do like to know what is going on. If they can't afford to buy mail order books regularly then they are a little stuck for information because they won't see the catalogues.

Certainly, I want to extend the review columns and cover as wide a variety as possible. On the other hand, I would like to avoid too much detail on any one subject, comics for example. The whole intention of this newsletter is to provide a general overview rather than in-depth analysis, and I am really not prepared to sacrifice too much space to any particular specialised interest at the risk of overlooking others.

I have also mentioned your thoughts on Guffstuff to Eve Harvey, and I expect to be hearing from her in the not-too-distant future.

Kevin McVeigh disagreed with Ken Lake on the subject of receiving booklists - we really will be keeping them, honest - and also went on to comment about the death of L Ron Hubbard.

Kevin McVeigh

I was dismayed by Michael Wippell's reaction to the death of L Ron Hubbard. The death of the founder has not as far as I'm aware been significantly detrimental to membership of the cult of Scientology. Indeed, I am inclined to believe that it could even increase as a result of his 'joining God'. I am saddened to think that, though Hubbard was undoubtedly evil, any rational person would rejoice in the death of another human being. It would surely have been so much better if the menace of his cult had been destroyed whilst allowing him to live. As Scientology lives on, what was there to be glad about? It is not the end of the man which brings victory but only the replacement of his evil work. And are we not all stained by our failure to provide a 'good' alternative to lead our children away from the evil? There can be more than one piper!

It makes me wonder, in all this fuss over the death of L Ron, just how many people actually know much, if anything, about Scientology. If anyone can supply a good, objective and unbiased (and that means either way) explanation of the working of Scientology I'd be glad to

take a look at it with a view to publication.

Ben Staveley-Taylor

33 Chalk Ridge, Winchester,
Hants, SO23 8QW

Reviews of media presentations seem to have a mandatory section where the reviewer explains how the production has failed to capture X, Y or Z. Could I ask reviewers to think seriously about when this criticism is relevant, and when the film or play should be judged on its own merits? I thought that the review of *Overdrawn at the Memory Bank* (M63) was bad in its comparisons with the 'original' version, and that of *Fahrenheit 451* (M64) was particularly good. I felt that I had learned something extra about Truffaut's film from the review. Directors (or screenplay writers or whoever) are more than mere agents for an author's message, they are themselves (hopefully) artists and have every right to alter a book's direction if they wish.

Would anyone like to add to that, some of our regular reviewers maybe? And how about joining the reviewing stable, Ben?

Perhaps it's time to move on to more general BSFA matters. The discussion about the awards seems to be going strong though I can't say I notice any particular conclusions being reached.

Nicholas Mahoney

275 Lonsdale Avenue, Intake,
Doncaster, DN2 6HJ

Concerning Terry Broome's comments there are a number of things he wasted a lot of space on which were just misunderstandings. My saying that *Sharra's Exile* didn't belong on the memory-jogger referred to it being a book of the year before not because of any belief that it was fantasy. Furthermore I think that the so-called memory-jogger should be definitive. If *Matrix* can inform us of every book coming out on a month by month basis then there's hardly much excuse for coming up with an inaccurate memory-jogger list.

By quality voters I mean votes from people who have actually read the necessary books rather than voting for their favourite authors or whatever.

As for distinguishing between SF and fantasy, which in rare cases can be a bit mind-boggling, I'm not campaigning for separate awards simply for appearance sake but more accurately

because fantasy novels have an unsavoury habit of carrying off SF awards and fantasy awards, leaving excellent SF novels without any awards at all. The reverse doesn't seem to happen.

Terry's views call for an extra division, having separate awards for hardbacks and paperbacks. I think that would be a bit pointless since almost all hardbacks of any note will make it into paperback. I'd much rather see two awards, one for SF and one for fantasy (and *Empire of the Sun*, etc) than one for paperbacks, one for hardbacks.

My most important point of 'only paperback eligibility' got some support. If only a few more members would come out of the woodwork in support, assuming that the majority prefers this system, then perhaps it could be installed.

I'd be glad to exchange views with anyone personally.

Rob Gregg

On the BSFA awards debate I agree with the virtually unanimous view that there should be two separate awards for best paperback and best hardback with only first editions being eligible. It should, though, remain as an award for SF or fantasy, with only first editions being eligible. One point rarely discussed is the validity of foreign novels in what purports to be the BRITISH Science Fiction Award. In my view the award should only be open to British writers and indeed, I automatically disqualified both Powers and Wolfe from this year's ballot.

Clive Woodley

29 Highlands Road, Orpington,
Kent, BR5 4JP

I thought, as one of the silent majority who did not vote, that I would scribble a few reasons why I didn't. Apart from the fact that all the SF books I buy, for financial reasons, are second-hand, and so are usually a year, or so old, I am not convinced of the value of the BSFA awards. I have seen no evidence that the publishers/producers etc pay any attention to a book or media presentation which has BSFA award winner tagged to it. Are awards for the edification of the fans who vote for them, or do they solely provide an egoboost to the award winner? Does even the award winner really care or take much note of winning a BSFA award? Please, if any person, including past winners, knows, can they inform me? I would like to know, I'm open to conversion.

Mike Brain

2 Paddock Way, Higher Kinnerton,
Chester, CH4 9BA

Might I suggest to Iain Anderson (M64, loc, p.24) and Terry Broome (M64 "Some awards thoughts"), that we support our local libraries for the good of SF fandom and its authors. I count myself among the majority who cannot afford hardbacks, but simply by paying 20p per novel you can order or reserve many recent SF publications. It doesn't even need to be a main town library. My village (population 800+) has a small library attached to a primary school and open only twice a week! Yet, they have managed to obtain over 20 novels for me in the last two years.

Andy Sawyer

1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane,
Little Neston, South Wirral, L64 4BT

Some comments in M64 suggest that people don't read hardbacks. Specifically, they don't or can't borrow them from libraries. I'm a librarian so obviously this is a bit of a hobby horse of mine. . . but are libraries that bad?

From my own experience of a not-very-progressive authority, a new novel can be requested and supplied in a relatively short space of time. Certainly, for most SF hardback novels you won't get the problem of long waiting lists as you would for the new Danielle Steel or Catherine Cookson! If a book isn't in stock at your library, then you should be able to request it: if this isn't the case perhaps you ought to drop a line to Richard Luce, Minister of the Arts, at the House of Commons and remind him about the bit in the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964, which refers to a local authority's duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient library service." (It might wake the buggler service. . .)

Broadening the scope of discussion, if BSFA members used the public library service to push for the purchase of more good hardback SF novels, it might have a beneficial effect on the trade.

I think it's time that we structured this discussion about the awards and made a serious effort to find out what people think. So, I'm want to organise a symposium on paper. If anyone would like to submit their views in writing - about 700 words at most, please - I will endeavour to solicit opinions from past awards winners and also ask Mike Moir to give his opinions, as awards administrator. I would particularly like to know why people don't vote, and what motivates those who do, and what categories they tend to vote for.

I'm tentatively planning this for Matrix 67 or 68, to give people time to marshall their views coherently, and me time to go back over the arguments and assemble the new material. This is a golden opportunity for you, the membership to have your say about what goes on, so I expect lots of you to be writing in, and that's not just those who have already contributed. So get moving.

Incidentally, we never seem to hear much from those people who are satisfied with the current awards set-up, obviously enough, I suppose. I mean, people don't tend to write when they're happy with something. Please write in, because your views are just as important.

Anyone else out there got anything nice to say about libraries, and who's had bad experiences trying to get new SF requested?

Stephen R Ealey

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Merseyside, L33 6VA

Recent discussion of the BSFA awards seems to have neglected the Best Artist award. It was Joseph Nicholas, I think, who said, some time ago, that without the "previous year only" criterion the award for best novel would go to the *Foundation* trilogy, say every year, clearly a situation to be avoided. However, this seems to be exactly the situation we are in with the Best Artist award. The same artists are nominated year after year - some have produced notable work in the preceding year, some have not. As Mike Moir suggests in his article, perhaps the nominations should be for a particular piece of artwork, say a magazine or book cover, or interior illustration.

Patrick Lee

24 Ousden Drive, Cheshunt,
Herts, EN8 9RI

I don't agree the Best Artist category should be changed. I think it should be left exactly as it is. If people were to vote for the best piece of artwork, how would they know what it was called. For example, a painting by Chris Foss was used on the cover of the *Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* (c.1979, Granada). It can also be found on the paperback edition of *Masters of the Vortex* by E E Smith. In the now out-of-print *21st Century Foss*, it is entitled 'A spaceship chasing a meteorite' or something similar.

Obviously, we need to consider the Best Artist award along with everything else, so thoughts, please, from interested parties on this matter as well.

And next, we have the continuing Bernard Smith/BSFA debate. Again, this is very difficult for me, walking into a situation which seems to have been going on forever, as the new editor of Matrix and as the newest BSFA committee member. I wasn't involved in what has already taken place, which makes it even harder to comment. However, let us start with Bernard's latest letter and then move on to responses engendered by his letter in M64.

Bernard Smith

8 Wansford Walk, Thorplands Brook, Northampton,

In reply to John Harvey's comments, the BSFA does, indeed, have a head. It's called the Council, and if they aren't running things, then who is? Did anyone suggest at the AGM that a temporary chairman be appointed until the problem is sorted out - that's the type of thing that most organisations usually do in these circumstances. The comments from Iain Anderson make it quite clear that I did not 'read anything' into John Harvey's reply, and that the content and tone were obvious. With regard to his asinine remark about 'pet projects', his own editorial states that *Antares* was launched by the BSFA. Is it that he doesn't read his own editorials, or just that he doesn't believe them?

I have been in contact with all the people who have been involved with producing *Antares* from the Cassandra end, and they are all as disgusted as I am at the deliberate lie that the delays had been caused by 'a distinct lack of communication' from our side. If this were the case perhaps someone would like to explain how ten works of fiction were sent to Alan Dorey - most of them typed up, camera-ready, along with eight A5 illustrations, one editorial and the cover design. Perhaps they would also like to explain the numerous letters on my file which have been sent to him since last September repeatedly asking for information and keeping him informed of our progress (I have one letter from him dated November '85). Perhaps he would also like to explain the repeated phone calls from Simon Ings who finally gave up in frustration. Perhaps he would like to explain why one of our members was assured, at Mexicon, that he had all the copy and that it was at the printers and ready to go for the April mailing - only to inform me by telephone that he 'hadn't received anything'. Everything sent from Cassandra has been done by recorded delivery - nothing has been acknowledged other than the cover and one piece of artwork. I was 'assured' over the telephone that a new printing date had been set and that *Antares* would definitely be in the June mailing. I

could therefore withdraw my letter. My refusal to do so unless something tangible was forthcoming from the BSFA end has resulted in the usual, and predictable, response of stonewalling and distortion. I received no reply to that particular letter and, amazingly, no *Antares* has appeared. Even if the original material has been 'lost in the post', what kind of editor sits back and lets a print deadline slip quietly slip by without even picking up the telephone to enquire where the work has gone? If John Harvey had not telephoned Alan Dorey to inform him of the contents of my Matrix letter, I wouldn't have known of the loss and would have been able to arrange for Simon Ings to not only send replacement manuscripts but also completely re-do the artwork. For the record, everything on my *Antares* file has been duplicated and sent to Maureen Porter, and I am quite happy to have any of it duplicated anywhere, anytime.

I fully appreciate that many members must be quite tired of hearing about this shambles, and I can assure them that all the people who have put in considerable time and trouble to try and get this project off the ground are equally sick of the whole business. After discussion with them, it was decided that something needed to be done to sort this business out once and for all. To this end, I wrote to Alan Dorey on 30th June 1986 and, on behalf of all the authors and artists, made it clear that we were prepared to give him until July 28th to produce *Antares*. If a copy did not reach me by that date, then permission would automatically be withdrawn to use any material produced by us, and the material should be returned.

I fully admit that, when the members of Cassandra agreed to get involved in this project, they did so against their better judgement and despite warnings from a number of people that we would be wasting our time. Nevertheless, we agreed and produced an amount of material totally out of proportion to our numbers (25). It was done on trust and the results are clear to see. This was the first time I have gone against my instinct - it will be the last.

If *Antares* appears in this mailing, it will be as a result of an ultimatum to the BSFA, not a commitment by it. If not, I think that an apology to the whole membership is called for - and not before time.

Hussain Mohamed

After Bernard Smith's kind comments about *Vector* production recently, I hesitate to criticise, but it really is quite pointless disgruntled members

writing in to BSFA publications in this way (Bernard's letter in M64). Even if the criticisms voiced had substance, and I'm not saying that they don't, to rail against the 'ineptitude' of the people who produce *Matrix* and others is not to cause sudden and radical change for the better but simply to make those accused rush out to buy an axe. It is one thing to level virulent criticism at professional publishers, but quite another when the publishers are people who hold down full-time jobs (often very demanding ones) and then spend their evenings and weekends working unpaid for the BSFA.

Fact: the reality of amateur publishing is that when the 'publisher' literally has no money to speak of (beyond what is needed to pay the printer) then everything has to be begged, borrowed or liberated; including the time if those who put it all together. In practical terms this means months or longer to actually get such programmes running. I have worked for a good number of years in publishing, so I do know what I'm talking about. All publishing is difficult. The higher the standards for which we aim the more difficult it becomes. The BSFA has no facilities of its own, beyond some ageing printing equipment that is no longer up to the job. We have no capital to help with the production. We are doing the very best we can with virtually no facilities to help us. Members *must* try to understand this.

Vector in its present shape took a great deal of hard and patient work. The same will hold true of *Matrix* under Maureen, and *Focus* under its new editor. But it will take time. Give the BSFA the budget of Condé Nast and we'll do it overnight! Otherwise . . .

Some may simply see this as a weak and feeble excuse, in which case all I can say is wait and watch. Criticise by all means but please, abuse is no earthly use to man nor beast. Bernard Smith is intemperate, rude and inaccurate. For example, how does he know that the committee 'allowed *Focus* to die'? He is not a member of said committee, so are we to suppose ESP or something else equally arcane. If you wish to accuse the BSFA of heinous criminal acts it would make sense to quote a few facts. Equally so, if members have comments to make about the publishing acumen of the BSFA, find out a little about publishing first. It's not as simple as you think.

I'm growing weary of this trading insults through the loccol. It's serving no constructive purpose, apart from giving people the chance to use Bernard Smith as an Aunt Sally. Whether or not

you agree with the tone he uses, he does have a point.

Several, in fact, but sniping at the BSFA Council is not going to help. The Council is an advisory body, and as such has little say in the day to day running of the BSFA - or so I understand. I don't actually think that the blame for this farce can be laid solely at the feet of the Committee. I don't like to criticise a person from this privileged position but Alan's style of chairmanship did not involve much in the way of delegation. He did everything himself, whether or not he really had the time to do so. That is neither an apology nor condemnation, merely a statement of his working methods. Doubtless he did it with the best of motives but as we now know, this can lead to untold problems.

The Committee has now managed to recover control and we have had the first of what will be a regular series of meetings in order to run the BSFA democratically. And that includes sorting out such messes as this. Obviously, we need to make sure that Antares is produced, either by Alan as promised or through retrieving the material. I have the correspondence from Bernard and I shall be circulating copies to all members of the committee. I shall also be writing to Alan should Antares not appear, and I undertake to keep on doing this until we get some sort of sensible answer. I am determined to see this business sorted out as it is bad publicity for both the BSFA and for Cassandra.

In return, I would ask members to think carefully about their responses to Bernard's letter. Sniping and abuse are satisfying when written down at a distance, but it's not much fun being at the sharp end of this magazine. Can I please appeal for a more temperate attitude, and less using Bernard Smith and Cassandra as BSFA bogeymen. I shall be in contact personally with Bernard, and I hope that between us, and with the help of the Committee we can get this sorted out, and ensure that it does not happen again, ever.

On the other hand, I support Hussain's comments on the work of production. It is hard work, we do it as our contribution to the BSFA, but we need understanding and proper support, not endless criticism.

Michael Cobley

Top Flat, 20 Ruthven Street, Hillhead
Glasgow, G12 9BT

The plain fact is that some initiative has to be taken to prevent the

Association sinking even further into chaos. There needs to be a far more professional attitude to the entire business of the organisation, reflected in a regular and more polished approach to the publications, bringing *Matrix* and *PI* up to *Vector's* level.

However, all these things cannot be accomplished without an enthusiastic - dedicated, even - company of people working on the publications and the Association's other responsibilities. I cannot believe that skilled and willing helpers do not exist among the membership; the problem is that those interested people are put off because nobody outside the Council and the Editorial Staffs knows how the BSFA works. Do all the current workers live in roughly the same area of the country? If so, how do they meet? What if someone at the other end of the country wanted to get involved - can s/he make any realistic contribution if s/he cannot travel south due to unemployment or some other problem.

In addition, there is no rational case for keeping the membership low - increased membership means an increase in funds as well as the volume of work. The mid-70's swamping crisis proves that an advertising campaign will dramatically increase applications for membership - therefore the organisation should prepare for it with an assured force of helpers and, it is important to point out, an increase in the membership fee. Let's not have any baulking at this. If we want a better service we are going to have to pay for it. Personally I would have no objections to paying £10, despite being unemployed.

One committee member comes from Liverpool, one from Glasgow, two from Folkestone. We meet in London or have done so far, and I presume we will continue to do so for now, simply because it is a useful focal point for transport. (We meet at John Harvey's house.) Those who attend committee meetings have their expenses paid so anyone can take a part if they wish. On the other hand, I don't think we'd be able to pay expenses for people to attend the stuffing meetings. Bear in mind that we are looking for a new membership secretary. If anyone wants to become involved, now is the time. There is no geographical discrimination, though groups tend to coalesce in areas with a high proportion of active fans.

I believe that skilled helpers must exist somewhere in the BSFA, but they seem very shy about coming forward. We can't make people work for us, which is why, as with any organisation, the dedicated few tend to continue doing the work. And this present committee is very

dedicated. I think that things are going to improve fairly rapidly.

Whilst the 'swamping crisis' demonstrated the power of advertising, the very fact of it causing a crisis also showed that we did not have the machinery to cope with it then, and the situation is much the same now. This is something we are aware of, particularly with the Worldcon coming to Britain next year, naturally a target for some strong recruiting. The hope is to have our administration on a firm footing by the beginning of 1987.

We need volunteers to help outwith manning desks at future conventions, in an attempt to promote the BSFA more vigorously. The committee members are few in number and we can't take on everything among us so would anyone be prepared to help run a desk from time to time, give an hour here or there? This would be of immeasurable value, particularly if you happen to be going to the Worldcon. Any offers to me.

Still on the subject of where the BSFA should be going

Colin Vernham

40 Manor Drive, Hinchley Wood,
Esher, Surrey, KT10 OAX

I propose 3 changes which will improve the BSFA's image, its membership level and funds:

1. Almost all societies, associations, etc have graduated membership fees, and I see no reason why the BSFA should not have at least two membership fees; one for those under 18 years old, and another, more expensive fee for the rest of the members who are more able to afford it.

2. At present the BSFA has three(?) publications and only *Vector* is reasonably well-printed; the others vary from very bad to bad. To solve all the problems of printing and distributing, all the magazines should be combined in a single, large, well-printed magazine. Such a magazine would have extensive SF news, BSFA news, interviews, book and film reviews, articles and maybe a short story or two as well!

A single magazine would provide a focus for the Association which is lacking at the moment, and the distribution problem would be solved since only one magazine has to be sent out to the members.

3. In this country there are two organisations which cater for science fiction and fantasy fans, the British Science Fiction Association and the British Fantasy Society. If both were combined into a single society the

membership would increase, along with funds, and so the publications would improve to the point where the members receive one a month, and the image of the society/association would be far more professional.

Some of the above mean drastic changes within the BSFA, so the members should be asked what changes they would prefer. Whatever objections are made to the above ideas, the BSFA has GOT to get out of the rut it is in at present.

So, what do people think?

On the second point, this argument surfaces from time to time, as does the awards debate. If all three magazines were to be combined, all three would suffer through having less space for each area of interest. Paperback Inferno, in its present form, would more or less disappear, and Vector and Matrix would jostle uneasily for position. I trust you will find the new, lithoed Matrix more to your taste. We hope PI will be going into the same format in the very near future. To be honest, I cannot see what difference one magazine or three will make, as we have no distribution problems to start with. This is one thing which has never suffered from problems of any sort. One or three, they still have to be stuffed into the envelopes and sent out.

On your last suggestion, having spent two paragraphs talking about improving our image, you promptly suggest that we destroy that image by amalgamating with another group. By the way, were you aware that the BFS was formed by a group of fans who broke away from the BSFA because they felt insufficient attention was placed on horror and fantasy? The BSFA and the BFS serve two different groups of fans and I am not certain how much of a crossover exists.

All amalgamation would mean is that the amalgamated society has the sum total of both memberships, and the sum total of their funds with which to administer that group. There is no financial gain to either side. In fact, if anything there will be a decrease in membership caused by that group of fans who are members of both societies. And having amalgamated, how would the running of this mega-society be organised, and what would we do about that single magazine you've just proposed?

How do other people feel about the idea?

IN BRIEF

I also heard from:

Toby Branfoot (11 Darell Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7AY) who

observed 'The BSFA gets out what its members put in, so if you want more out, put more in' to which I can only add my hearty agreement.

Ian Brooks and Peter Creffield (13 Coppice Road, Whitnash, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV31 2JF) both asked about the difference between supporting and attending membership at conventions. The simple answer is that attending membership is more expensive but gives you entry to the con, whilst supporting membership is cheaper and designed for those who won't be attending the con but who either want to show support and/or receive the information, badge and programme book. It is always possible to convert from supporting to attending. Only attending members can make hotel bookings.

Phil Nichols (19 Kendal Avenue, Copnor, Portsmouth, Hants, PO3 5AX) wrote, underlining the need for information about the BSFA and its services. I am busy trying to find out about those still available but would like to hear a) your experiences with any that you have used, and b) your ideas on other things we should be doing.

Ken Lake (115 Markhouse Avenue, London, E17 8AY) (twice!) with lots of fascinating comments, ideas and advice, and still holding out against listing new book releases. You already know my feelings - they won't be scrapped.

I Everton (145 Victoria Road, Leeds, LS6 1DU) who wanted an apology for John Harvey's 'We don't need no proofreader' remark, but unfortunately didn't say why.

Alastair Lovett (19 Arncliffe Avenue, Stockton, Cleveland, TS18 3QB) writing his first letter to the BSFA, highlighting the lack of publicity again, and commenting on the absence of articles about Olaf Stapledon's centenary. I'll mention this to Dave Barrett of Vector, as critical articles aren't really within my brief, but there is a Stapledon conference being held at Liverpool University later in the year, and I hope to be able to find someone to give us a report on the gathering.

Roy Hill (8 Windsor Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 3UN) commenting 'I always find the concept of, unpaid volunteers working for me in their spare time amazing, and to criticise them for what they have not done without thanking them for their achievements is ungracious.'

So, keep those letters coming in, and remember that the first 'new' writer will receive a small bonus.

SOAPBOX

What is Science Fiction Anyway?

by Ken Lake

Just what IS science fiction anyway? I think we all have our own definitions; my problem is that, buying all my books by mail from dealers' lists, I find that I am constantly paying for things that I don't want, don't like and don't regard as being SF at all.

Of course, the dealers have to sell the goods, and many of their lists do go a long way towards giving me a good idea of the contents and slant of the books they list. But I'm afraid it's not enough: can I get other fans to kick around some basic definitions in the hopes that we can agree on a classification for the genre?

To explain in brief: I do NOT want to read what I regard as 'horror' or 'fantasy' in general (though I admit happily that a few fantasy books, mostly humorous ones, have given me immense pleasure). I do not want what I call 'space opera' (but is it what YOU call it too?), and I do not want books that deal with 'the return to the primitive'. So let's see where we go from there:

1. Horror: today's world, menaced by unpleasant things. Fair enough?
2. Fantasy: worlds where, although the laws that control them are self-consistent, we recognise them as 'laws' that have no validity in any world that we can realistically expect to exist in the Universe-as-we-know-it, past or future as well as present.
3. Science fiction: well, this breaks down into a number of categories, leaving behind what one usually calls 'hard-core SF'. The main categories seem to be:
 - a) Time travel and/or alternate history (my all-time favourite subject, as it happens, so dealers wanting me to buy should always flag such works clearly for me!)
 - b) Space opera - any story which could without serious dislocation be transferred to a non-SF genre; in other words, stories where the SF is a mere trapping, not an essential part of the story (these I do NOT

want to read, so I'd welcome a firm indication on dealers' lists)

- c) Adventure SF - not to be confused with space opera because the SF is essential, but these are stories where action is its own raison d'être (the Venture SF series is an excellent example)
- d) Stories of primitive worlds past or future - these bore me to tears but should nevertheless be distinguished from the next group
- e) Post-holocaust stories, where there is enough science and history and sociology to tie the story to the world-as-we-know-it, in other words this is a subclass of dystopias, but I was trying to avoid that aspect
- f) Worlds developing from ours by extrapolations of sociological, religious or similar 'soft' sciences, whether dys- or u-topic.
- g) Worlds where the development has been technological, scientific, with no overtones of religion or ethics forming any important aspect of the raison d'être
- h) Humour - to me this is a separate category and whether it's humour (or parody) on any of the above categories makes little difference as I find I usually enjoy this class of book.

Now to me each of these categories indicates a different KIND of book, and for me to choose happily from any list, I often need guidance on which category a given book falls into. But I am often not getting that guidance at all - in fact some dealers' lists are so badly done that I am even conned into buying HORROR stories - or I was, until I spent a great deal of time making up a list of every horror writer so that I could recognise them at once!

Who will support me in this campaign for a Trade Descriptions Act applied to the definition of SF, so that we cannot be flogged Stork for butter? Or who can post definitions which are better than mine, more workable, more logical, more helpful? Over to you!