

# Ornithopter

(the Fanzine  
which Flaps around)





## ORNITHOPTER

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Edited (so to speak) and produced by Leigh Edmonds, PO Box 103, Brunswick, Victoria 3056, AUSTRALIA for the May '77 mailing of FAPA. Yes folks, yet another heart stopping last minute postmailing to save the membership this year! Not the change of address. Note also that this is a postmailing to the May FAPA mailing and you should stick it in with the bundle instead of just tossing it into the rubbish bin or getting it last in all those other fanzines. Of course if you are not a member of FAPA and get this anyhow, you are quite entitled to do something other than put it in a FAPA mailing which you haven't even got, in fact I expect that you will do that.

This fanzine may at times look like a personalzine but believe me it is a red-blooded apazine in a thin paper disguise. Hence, people who wish to LoC this (or whatever it is that one does to fanzines in these modern times) may rest easy in the knowledge that I am grateful and may send them something else to comment on one of these days. But ORNITHOPTER is not expected to be a regular sort of fanzine - atleast one hopes not.

11/5/77

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GREETINGS FAPANS: There should be a law against people like me, I reckon so anyhow. Not only do I have the nerve to submit these miserable eight pages as the sum total of my contribution to FAPA, I have the nerve to post-mail them as well. And to make matters even worse, this is the second time that I've postmailed eight pages to save my skin.

This sort of thing should not be allowed to happen. But thankfully it does since the last year has been a fairly busy one and for most of that time I have also been labouring under the misapprehension that I was no longer a member. If you have very long memories you may recall that the previous incarnation of this fanzine was posted out on the eve of a move which Valma and I made from our old and reasonably happy home in St Kilda out to trendy Carlton where we were to take up residence with Carey Handfield. The move was completed around the same time that the May '66 mailing was sent out but unfortunately it seems that I did not officially notify anybody of my new address and so the mailings went on to the old address and I never saw them (probably shipped back to the US at great expense and then pulped or somesuch). I did not interperate this as being a sign that I hadn't told anybody where I was but as a sign that I had read the rules wrong or something and had been tossed out on my ear for lack-of-activity. A fairly reasonable assumption.

But more recently I heard that FAPA was trying to find out where I was and then one day a mailing lobbed its way into my letter box and I was still a member.

At around about the same time as that happened Valma and I moved again, this time out to a nice little red-brick house in the suburb of Brunswick. We've been here for almost the last four months and sure I could have contributed something to this mailing through the regular channels, but you know what letharge is all about. This time I believe that I have notified the proper people that I have got a new address. So maybe nothing unusual will happen this time.

A DISCUSSION OF THE ARTS! Our tv set has been fairly overheating these past few weeks, it seems to have cooled off in the last few days though because a lot of the stuff that we've been looking at has run out and this week a couple of others have been supplanted by "specials" which are usually nothing of the sort.

Top of the Valma & Leigh Popularity chart is "Doctor Who" which makes the odd appearance on the ABC. At the moment we have just seen the last of "Genesis of the Daleks" and have begun on "Revenge of the Cybermen". Strange how both the Doctors greatest groups of enemies should happen to crop up just one after the other. Although I am



not sure of the fact, I get the impression that Doctor Who is not seen that often in the US, which means that the people who don't get a chance to see it are missing some of the best sf on tv. Although the script is aimed at a pretty low age level it does not mar the enjoyment for anybody who is a little bit older. The plots are quite often not much higher than the sorts of things which I might have dreamed up when I was a little person but they are carried off with the sort of style which is just not evident in US kids shows. And the special effects are getting better all the time.

In the current story (of which we have only seen the first episode) there is this little beastie which goes about pretending to be a vampire. It's a nice little sleek metallic thing with no visible means of movement or sensing but when it bites you you've had it mate. It always goes for the neck, somehow effortlessly leaping up from its slithering position to where it attaches itself by its teeth (or whatever it is that little alien slithering segmented armour beasties have) and then it injects the fatal dose. The Doctor has already suggested that the reason the poison is so fatal is not that it is intentionally so but because it is alien. The Doctor knows all about that sort of thing.

At the end of the episode we are in the middle of the bit where the beastie sneaks up on Sahara Jane (the female lead) and is attempting to get its teeth into her. However she is fighting back gamely and we have to wait until next Sunday at 7.30 to see what happens. Certainly The Doctor is not going to race in and save her because he is currently having problems of his own, being locked in a room in which the floor is highly electrically charged and the atmosphere is slowly being taken over (or replaced shall we say) by some sort of naughty gas which is either going to put him to sleep or kill him. Another little problem to be solved next Sunday.

Moving back in the week we come to Thursday evenings when the ABC used to broadcast "Fawlty Towers" a comedy which starred John Clees. Sad to say there are only six episodes because it is some of the best humor which I have ever seen and in four out of the six episodes I was laughing so hard that I was having some real trouble trying to breathe as well. I was never a fan of Monty Python (a repeat series of which has replaced "Fawlty Towers" and which I shall not be watching) but John Clees on his own and in a realistic setting is a genius. The setting, just in case you haven't seen the show, is a small private hotel which Clees and his wife run. He is a very pathetic figure in the show, but very arrogant, completely dominated by his wife and with the fabulous ability to go to pieces under even the slightest stress in a manner which most people can only daydream about. I simply will have to refrain from telling you anything more about it, the scenes, lines and so on will not be done justice being quoted out of context. And if you didn't like this show then I can only suggest that you rush to the mortician straight away to see that your sense of humor gets a decent burial.

"Starsky & Hutch" is the only US thing we watch on the box. When they were still making "McCloud" we used to look at that too but that disappeared at the end of last year and we haven't seen a thing about it yet. The thing which we like about the show are the personalities of the two characters, there is really no other reason for looking at it. Well maybe there is the fact that as far as I can tell the show is a lot more realistic in that while it is a cop-and-robbers one it is not a detective one in that they don't spend their time messing about with clues. The little that I have heard on the subject tends to suggest to me that most criminals these days are caught by somebody telling the police about them, and that is the way that it works in this show. I very rarely recall anything more than the most rudimentary deductions taking place.

I seem to recall that Valma and I got hooked on this show one evening after "The Invisible Man" when we were too lazy or tired or something and just gazed at whatever it was that came on after it. The story was nothing at all to get worked up over but the manner in which the characters played off each other was a delight to watch and after that they

became required viewing in this household. There wasn't an episode on this week but the plots of the few weeks before that have been a little the same. There was the episode in which a bunch of nuts kidnapped Starsky and Hutch spend a harrowing fifty minutes looking for him. The next one had Hutch run off the road by some nasty person and trapped underneath his car while his partner tried to find him. Then the next week there was the evil mob of people who were getting annoyed at Hutch for some reason and tried to get to him through his girlfriend, who fortunately survived. The next week Starsky's girlfriend was not half so fortunate and took most of the episode to die off after some maniac had tried to get at Starsky. I wonder what will happen next time around. There have been some excellent episodes, some which would be so hard to take that people would probably not sit through them if it weren't for the interaction between the two characters. I guess that in a way people (and me among them) must draw some sort of strength from the characters in that particular show, because the world in which they live is very much a far worse place than the one in which I live, and yet they still keep on smiling. If they can we can too, atleast in theory.

The other feature of the viewing week is another British show, and extremely British this time, "The Duchess of Duke Street". The Duchess is a woman who started out as a kitchen help in a kitchen of one of the houses of the wealthy in Edwardian England. She worked her way up until she became the most sought after cook in London. She also met the Prince of Wales and enjoyed some evenings in his exclusive company which turned out very well financially and then she bought a small private hotel, mainly as something to keep her drunkard husband off the bottle. But he hit the bottle at her expense and after the third episode she finds that he's been spending all the money and they are bankrupt. She throws him out into the street and sets off to repay the massive debt he has built up and luckily she meets an old friend who helps her out and then they fall in love etc., etc. By the time that we are up to now she is a very successful hotel proprietor and the stories have drifted off to being more about the people who stay in the hotel. It is all very well done with a very nice feeling of style, taste and period, and I'm not the kind of person who can resist a well turned "rags to riches" story. I seem to recall reading somewhere that the show was immensely popular in the UK and I can see why with very little trouble.

The other show, and I think that it must be about the last one which we've been looking at regularly, is "The New Avengers". The first episode that they showed in Melbourne was quite an ordinary one and we all had the feeling that this was going to be a monumental flop. But it has not been that way at all. The three actors have built up a very good rapport over the series and it is a delight to watch them work. Too add to the fun there have been some very good plots, not so great to have equalled some of the Steed-Peel greats, but very good nonetheless. There was a ripper when some evildoer revived the cybernauts and infact recreated himself as one to get revenge on Steed, Gambit and Purdy. Another one was the giant monster in the sewers under London. All very good fun but I'm afraid that the last episode we saw, which was last week, was the last in the series. I don't keep up with media news to know whether they have made any more. I guess that it all depends on whether the US market has snapped it up, somehow I get the impression that they might not. I don't live in the US so I cannot gauge the sorts of things that the average people who look at the box are interested in. However from the kinds of things that we see as having come out of America I get the rather distinct impression that that market might not be as keen for the Very British stuff that might have slipped in in the late '60's.

Valma and I do look at other odds and ends, the occasional stfnal film as it comes on, just for example. There was "The Terminal Man" on a couple of weeks back, but I didn't watch it for some reason and Valma reports that it was fairly disappointing. There was also "This Island Earth" which I had not seen fully before. I recall seeing parts of it at Aussiecon as I messed about with



pies and pasties, putting them into the warmer and stacking them up. I was, to put it mildly, disappointed that there was so much carry on in the first two thirds of the film before anybody gets to leave earth, and they they fly off to the other planet only to spent five minutes there as it gets blown up and then fly back to earth again. A third of the time on the earth and the rest on the other planet might have made for something much more interesting.

But who wants to talk about films anyhow. Valma and I have developed into old stay-at-homes in the last couple of years and you could probably count on the fingers of half a hand the number of films that Valma and I have actually gone out to see in the last twelve months. In the period of a week we saw two earlier this year when Christopher Priest was out here. He seems to be interested in films and so when he said that he wanted to go and see two Australian films that were on at the time we thought it would be a good idea and anyhow it gave us a good excuse to knock around with the famous. The two films were "Caddie" and "The Devils Playground". The first one is about a woman who worked her way through the depression as a barmaid and the other was set in the fifties at a Roman Catholic pre-seminary and was supposed to explore the lives of the boys and the teachers there. I remember at the time that one struck me a great deal more than the other but at this late stage, a couple of months later, I'm afraid that I cannot recall a thing about my arguments. Which goes to show you how much I absorb of films, in one eye and out the other.

Not being a very religious person, although I suffered the standard Methodist childhood, it never ceases to amaze me that people who are supposed to be Christians pay so little attention to the business about the life after death, heaven and hell and all that. If I really believed all that stuff I have the strong feeling that I would be out spending most of my time trying to talk people into becoming good Christians (I don't mean Good in the moral sense, more in the "faith" sense). See, it occurs to me that if you believe all that stuff you believe that the people who do not believe in Jesue Christ and have not confessed their sins to him and put their lives in his hands, and so on, are doomed to spend the rest of eternity in hell. And since hell is supposed to be a pretty terrible place you'd reckon that anybody who is a Christian would be busy trying to save you and I from such a fate. However I get the impression that these days Christians are very much concerned with good works, which might be all well and good but what the hell if we are really only going to spend seventy or so years here and the rest of eternity paying it off.

SO MUCH FOR THEOLOGY? The above paragraph was supposed to go after this heading only I got myself confused, which is not difficult.

I guess the little comment of theology is sparked off by "The Devils Playground". If I were to become a Christian again I suspect that I would have to become a Catholic, I may not be too keen on some of their modern moral stands but I do like the way in which they still seem to hold onto the doctrin that there is such a thing as Evil, etc. It seems to me that a lot of people in society probably consider themselves as christians and probably would believe in god if they had to think about it. But if they were pressed they would probably find the prospect of a real Satan very unpalatable. Yet the doctrin says that if you've got the good side you aldo have the bad, I guess that oen of the reasons the Adversary plays his hand with such a low key is that if we were coming up with demonic possesions and other clear signs of black magic every day the churchs would be cram packed full. This way about the smart fellow gets to pick us all up because we really don't believe in all that rubbish anyhow and therefore are lost.

WORMS: Recently, as most Australians will know, there was a lot of ide noise being made by a lot of politicians (some of whom should have known better) about the prospect of a wages and prices freeze in this country. Attempting to leave political allegiances out of this for a moment, which I find very difficult, there was one particular event stemming from it which really turned



my stomach. The ABC did a full half-hour live session with the Prime Minister Big Mal Frazer, the full session of their current events programme This Day Tonight.

The format of the programme was that people rang in to the studio and put questions to the Prime Minister on the subject of the proposed freeze and he would answer the questions. Now I am no great fan of the PM's and so I did not take in all of the session, in fact I was so apathetic that I did not know that it was on until halfway through. But when I did realise what was going on I popped into the lounge room to take in some of what was happening and it was maybe ten seconds before the idiot of a man completely disgusted me. Although I cannot remember any of the exact answers to any exact questions I do recall most plainly being aware of the fact that, for a start, the man was not answering the questions, he was evading the point of the questions being asked to make points which were in some ways connected with what he wanted to say. I also noticed that in most of the things that he said he twisted to suit himself the fact as I have understood them from reading and listening to the ABC (the only source of news which I halfway trust). And in a few cases the things which he said directly contradicted what I understood to be the truth. It was not long before I got up and left the room, muttering to myself that "that man will never be allowed in this house again". I have seen him in the lounge room twice since then but each time he's been there his lips have moved without any sound coming out, and a very good thing too.

Accidentally I, last Thursday, saw a man who makes Big Mal look like a saint. I refer to the first of the Nixon Interviews. Kitty and David Vigo invited us over to look at the last of the Fawlty Towers episodes on their colour tv set and earlier on in the evening there was the first of the Nixon Interviews, as I guess everybody saw it. Whereas Big Mal atleast pretended to answer questions we almost actually heard Nixon say... "I'm glad that you asked that question, now I'll answer a different one". It was a truly pathetic performance and even though I did not for one moment expect to hear anybody say anything new I had hoped that there might have been some sort of confrontation between the two men but David Frost just seemed to go on and let Nixon say what he wanted to say. Even in glowing colour it was a pretty distressing and very annoying hour. I hope that I shall accidentally forget to see the other three interviews - Lillies and fine sunsets indeed!. However I was glad to see that Mr Nixon is looking a lot healthier these days.

MY EXCITING LIFE..... If anybody is expecting an extended essay on this subject they have another thing coming. I honestly don't know where all the time has gone to in the last year because if nothing else I don't have much to show for it. Having moved twice is a fair dislocation and perhaps you can attribute a lot of the nothingness that I seem to have done to the fact that we have twice in the last year packed our lives into boxes and then unpacked them again. A lot of stuff was infact not unpacked between the first and second move because the space that we took up in Carlton was really pretty small and there was not time to utilise it all properly.

Here we have what would one have been more than enough room but already we seem to have used most of the available space and have plans for the rest of it. In the last month or so I've build about another thirty feet of shelf space and yet we still have a couple of boxes of books that we want to get out, and I hope also to be able to get some of my models out on display as well, but that looks like being a little while yet.

This place also has a garden which in the long run should be very handy for growing a few vegies and like stuff. But at the moment the back yard garden is still a great mess and it will take a lot of work yet. I really am not the sort of person who enthuses over gardens but my main project so far has been to attack the hardened soil with a garden fork to break it up so that we can



get the broken bottles, plastic bags, odd bits of shart and strangly shaped wire and all the other junk which the previous tennants tossed into it. It seems that they used it as their private rubbish dump and so Valma and I have a lot of work to do before it is back into the condition where it can produce anything. And while this is not a particularly large garden it is large enough that it has taken a good long time to get as far as we have which might be about half-way.

Atleast the owner of the place seems glad to see that we are doing something about it, I get the impression that the man thinks that everybody he comes across are just lazy bums who sit around in the back yard drinking and leaving the bottles where they drop.

Socially life around here has been fairly dull. There was the writers workshop organised in February for which Vonda McIntyre and Christopher Priest came out. We'd only moved in a week or so before Vonda arrived and we had her staying here for most of her stay in Australia, and a very enjoyable house-guest she is too. Towards the end she and Chris Priest swapped over so that we had him also for a few days before he went back to Britain and besides we went to a couple of films with him and carted him off other places too. one of the most enjoyable events was apparently when Valma took both of them off to a wildlife sanctuary in the Dandenongs for the day. I was stuck at work so I didn't get to go, but they all came back full of excited chatter and Chris now does an exceptional impersonation of the Hairy Nosed Wombat.

After they went home again and left us and the majority of Melbourne fandom feeling sad at having to say goodbye to two good people and new friends there has been very little that Valma and I have done in the way of socialising. We may have invited a half-dozen people over for dinner at various times and I seem to recall a slight party in there and that must be about it. We seem to have become very asocial people, we even discourage people from ringing us on the phone.

There were also conventions on in Sydney and Adelaide over Easter and we went to neither, it has been a long time since I willingly passed up a convention, it shows the lethargy, social lethargy anyhow, into which we have fallen. And its a good thing too, if we went around visiting people all the time and having them visit us we'd never get anything done.

A STATEMENT OF EDITORIAL POLICY: The editorial policy board of ORNITHOPTER (The Fanzine Which Flaps Around) has just made the snap decision that the publications section will run off a few more copies than we had previously anticipated (that being the FAPA membership and waitinglist) to spread around to let some people know that we still exist. I get the feeling that there may be a lot of American fans who think that as soon as Valma and I got back from our DUFF trip we went Gafia, came out for the WorldCon a bit and have not been seen since. There has been an issue of RATAPLAN (that was about a year and a half ago although I'm currently working on the next issue which should be out RSN, and would be even Sner if it weren't for FAPA), a DUFF report and the occasional contribution to SAPS, APA45 and this apa.

Well, me little darlings, the majority of my fanac for the last two years seems to have gone into the publication of FANEW SLETTER which is a fortnightly newsheet of sf and fandom as she happens in Australia. There's generally not too much happening so that on the average I guess that we've come out around the three or four pages per issue, the norm is supposed to be two pages, a sheet that is, but the issue before last went up to 15 pages while the current one (issue 79) is a humble two pages. Although it really doesn't add up to much paper over a year the publishing of FANEW SLETTER regularly, the posting and all that does take a fair slice of energy and interest as I suppose some people who have tried newszines know from experience.

And since there is very little that I publish which has much to do with fandom outside Australia very few copies get to leave the country and so I sometimes get the vague impression that people



assume that I'm gafia. Fandom is a "publish or perish" sort of environment, fanzine fandom anyhow, so I shall cast a few extra copies of this into the fannish stream and see if anybody notices. For a mere eight pages I guess not to any great extent. For a while there I did have thoughts of going on at more length but the fact is that while postage in Australia is a matter of the size of the envelope the stuff that is sent overseas still goes by weight and postage here is high enough as it is without charging myself more on the spur of the moment.

ANOTHER DISCUSSION OF THE ARTS: The other thing that Valma and I look at on the tv from time to time is a local program called COUNTDOWN. The way we got onto looking at this is because it is slotted by the ABC very neatly after Doctor Who and these days it fits very nicely after Doctor Who with just enough time to make up something to eat before "The Duchess of Duke Street" come on.

COUNTDOWN is a Pop music programme and most of the music which is featured on the show is of dubious nature, played by musicians of dubious quality to a dubious audience. Then there is some really ghastly stuff and the occasional flash of down right brilliance. In the middle, the dubious stuff, there is all that disco music. Disco music is dull mind rotting stuff which, it seems to me atleast, encourages the listeners to do nothing more than wave their limbs around and jump up and down rhythmically until they kill themselves or the band goes home for the night. This music, while it may just have some dance value has no social value and very little musical value. I seem to recall one number which had a very catchy bass line but that's about as far as it goes.

The ghastly stuff is the music churned out for the mums and the kids who have exhausted themselves jumping up and down, the ubiquitous ballad. And most of this stuff is pure junk having no value of any sort. Take for example the lousy David Sould thing which, in Melbourne atleast, is the top of the hit parade. The main trouble with that fellow is that he can't sing very well, if at all.

And I'm sorry if I'm standing on any corns here, I dislike the modern ballad as she is spread to the world over the radio simply because such things are by their design inferior to very similar pieces of music which were written in Germany in the last century by Schubert, Schumann and the like. If people are going to sing that sort of thing let them atleast sing it well. For all its faults disco music performs a function which ballads cannot, there is no classical equivalent to disco music.

The stuff on COUNTDOWN which I class as brilliant is very hard to come by and, for the sake of argument, is limited to three groups that I know of. These groups are AC/DC, STATUS QUO and THE SAINTS. The first and the last are Australian groups and are therefore probably unknown in the US. The kind of stuff that they play is hard rock though not really boogie rock or what we might call these days trad rock. The STATUS QUO sound must these days be familiar to everybody but since I am only a recent convert to their music I have invented my own descriptor for what they sound like, "two-stroke music". When that band are really going the emphasis of their music lies in a very strong emphasis on the beat which give a chugging effect which sounds like a two stroke engine. It is just a very short movement of either the drum or the bass and the group rocks back to boogie rock which is all very well and nice but it takes the sharp edge off their music. The reason that I listen to rock at all is for the energy because it is something which classical music can provide even less than it can the ingredients of disco music.

The SAINTS are a new group and in fact quite inexperienced, however it is a long time since I have heard music anything like theirs. The "critics" call the stuff New Wave and I've heard that their second single is very popular in Britain though this may be propaganda spread over here to help sell them. Their sound is big and flat in

a fashion similar to that generated by STATUS QUO, but a much finer construction in my opinion because it lack the obvious rhythmic pulse of QUO and instead contains the same energy inside the sound wall. The line up of the group is the standard five man band but when they are playing there is no obvious boundary between the instruments, their sound quality, and it all merges into the one extremely energetic sound. The singer is really pretty pathetic but his vocal quality does not detract from the group, perhaps if he was any better he would separate himself from the total sound and break the lot. The same for the gent on lead guitar, when the time comes for him to do his bit the sound doesn't leap out at you but you begin to perceive that some of the basic sound has changed quality and that infact if you pick it up the guitarist is pretty good. But once again he has either the ability to know how to control himself or he doesn't have the ability and the sound remains integrated.

While the sound is not a new one it is the sort of new way of playing rock which I hope more people play. Quite possibly the stream that they are following will prove increasingly hard to remain in, but if they can make it work they are really going to open up options for future groups.

And to my mind AC/DC are the best group to come along since the Rolling Stones. Whenever I say this in the hearing of Bruce Gillespie he sneers, nevertheless I will continue to say it because I believe it to be true. It has also suddenly occurred to me that I promised Hank & Lesleigh Luttrell that I would write them an article about this group for STARLING and I really should save them up for that article.

This leaves me with some space yet to fill up, unfortunately I shall have very little trouble in doing that since I will probably write about the other things which seems to eat into my time, that is apart from fandom, looking at the tv, reading, writing, composing and etc.

My oldest hobby, predating fandom by six years and even reading everything in sight by a couple is that of making plastic models. This is something which I have not generally written about in fanzines though I cannot imagine a reason for it. Perhaps I've thought that it was one of those subjects in which fans would have no interest.

I remember the first model I made with about the same clarity I remember the same sf book that I read. The story was "A Thousand Ages" but I've somehow forgotten who the author was and even though I bought a copy only recently in a secondhand book shop I cannot seem to find it now. The first model I made was the Airfix Hawker Hurricane IVRP, that was back in 1959. I am glad to have a copy of the book but I would probably be very put out today if I were to buy a copy of a Hurricane at the low level that that one was.

Naturally it was a present, for Christmas and it kept me quiet for a few hours and when we went down to the big city a week or two later I took my precious spending money and squandered it on copies of the Airfix Messerschmitt Bf 109F and North American P-51D. My grandmother was the one who thought that I was squandering my money, I thought I had obtained the latest word in pleasure beyond description, even at 4/9 each which must have been a considerable mark up on what they would have cost in Britain at that time.

By current standards those models are just about unusable but they gave me a great deal of pleasure. For a while I was making them as fast as I could lay my hands on them and after a year or so I thought that I was doing a pretty good job. When I got a job in 1965 I could almost afford more models than I could handle but then I came down to Melbourne and got involved in fandom.

At the end of the '60's I Gafiated from plastic models just about entirely but then one day I saw in a toy shop that Airfix had a model of a M551 Sheridan tank and I could not resist temptation. These days I probably dedicate a fair amount of time to modelling but these days its quality instead of quantity and so it doesn't cost very much.



Back in 1967, or some time like that, I could whip through a half-dozen models on a rainy weekend and my memory tells me that they were pretty decent things. Unfortunately for my memory I recently came across one of the constructions of one of those busy weekends and it is, to put it mildly, abismal.

At the moment my workbench is occupied with a half made Fujimi McDonnell F-4E Phantom II which will eventually have Australian markings. When I say eventually I mean something like another five or so months, it's already been in the works for four months (on and off) and we've only just done as much as we could in the cockpit before we move on to more general work. The trouble is that I need to go over the interior of the cockpit with some clear varnish to seal in the work on the instrument panels since the work was done in indian ink and if I get it wet (which is likely to happen) there goes a couple of days of work.

And the reason that I haven't got around to putting the clear varnish on is because I still haven't got this place set up properly so that I can use the airbrush. The room I was using at St Kilda had a window which opened straight outside and so there was no trouble with ventilation. However the place at Carlton and the one here have rooms which I use which do not have windows opening onto the outside world and so I don't use the airbrush in the room which would be the most convenient. Also, I gave up smoking in the middle of last year and so there is no foul tobacco smell to cover up the smell of atomised paint, and the brand of paint that I use is very smelly.

The trouble with plastic models these days is that every time I look inside the box of a new kit the thing which strikes me the most is that the parts in the box have the potential for transformation into an exact replica of the real thing. It seems to me to be a good waste of plastic and money if I don't do my best to make the model into an exact replica. Unfortunately that potential is never realised because of the inevitable slips here and there in the construction and the painting, because of the little lapses of concentration in the research and occasional attacks of laziness when you just want to get on with the business of producing the model when another two or three minutes attention to some detail would make all the difference..

Which means that even though I spend a lot more time on any model these days I still don't seem to be reaching the standards of perfection I would like to, and in fact I'm still producing something which is only a bit better than average. I aspire to the "perfect model" but don't look like getting to it for at least another couple of decades. If I were to gaffiate I might make it a few months earlier with all the spare time I would be able to generate. I'd probably be a better fan if I didn't spend so much time messing around with plastic pieces either.

I think that one of the things about plastic models is that, unlike most other activities in life, it is something which is obviously completed when you have finished work on it. Although the same might apply for a fanzine a fanzine is not much use unless you send it to other people and they read it. A model is finished when you've completed the paint job, put on the markings, the last little fiddly bits of plastic and maybe even weathered it. Then you can put it in the case to be displayed and you have actually accomplished something. These days there seem to be very few things in life which one can actually see to have finished when you've done what you can to it to make it complete.

The other reason that I spend so much time on models is because, as I am beginning to become aware, the shape of things interests me. I really am not a great fan of paintings or films or cartoons. I am not either a great fan of sculpture, but give me a nice clean aerodynamic shape and I am instantly pleased. When I suffered the art course at high school about the only thing that made much sense to me was the dictum that if something efficient and functional then it is usually pleasing as well. For this reason I never spent my childhood in the admiration of cars, as did most of the boys my age. I have always felt that cars were not shaped to be functional, they are shaped



to conform to whatever the manufacturers will think that they can sell.

A few months back my favourite shape was the Republic F-105 Thunderchief but at the moment I cannot make up my mind between the MiG 25 (Foxbat) and the Convair F-106 Delta Dart. Either shape has its attractions, the MiG is a very fine example of the current chunky aircraft types along with the F-14 and F-15. On the other hand the F-106 harks back to the days when the delta was the new wave of design. It is a slim and delicate thing, similar to the Mirage III but in most aspects superior to it in line. The Mirage looks very French but then I have never been a great fan of the European school of design, except that the Germans tossed up some fine shapes in the second half of WW2.

Perhaps the one thing that saved aeroplane design from becoming as dull and streamlined as it appeared it would become at the edge of the "sonic" age is the area rule. I suppose that everybody is familiar with the ways in which sf artists of the forties depicted aerodynamic shapes of the future, all streamlined and very flashy, but rather dull too in retrospect. Thankfully aerodynamics does not operate in a nice smooth manner so that aeroplanes these days are developing more and more kinks and bumps as they develop. There can hardly be any connection at all between the sorts of machines that artists in the forties would have imagined being in the skies in the late seventies and machines like the F-15 Eagle which must be one of the bumpiest shapes around. I personally think that it is a magnificent looking machine, the shapes imposed upon it by the confrontation between the laws of nature and the wills of the designers are honest shapes and bear no mark of any attempts to conform to modern day ideas of style. No doubt car designers will move in on the feeling generated by the shape of the F-15 and you'll be able to buy it in a counterfeit form stamped out of sheet metal and spot welded onto the chassis of your choice.

FINAL WORDS: I should like to continue on for another few pages, this is one of those times when the heavy pressings of a deadline seems to have forced the old brain into action. Naturally the first draft result is not as highly pleasing as it might be or even should be, but that's the trouble with these deadline things.

The main trouble with first draft material, I find anyhow, is that the ideas which come up in it are generally just touched on and then dropped. The business about the shape of aeroplanes is one which should last for a good many pages but it is doubtful that I will ever take the time out to develop the idea much more than I have here, and that is possible because now that I have tossed up the half baked idea I have used it and can dream up something else. Most fan writing suffers from the same fate, only the very best of sf criticism escapes from this iceberg approach but then fandom is a medium which will soak up anything that is written and so it really doesn't matter what you write, if you write enough of it you will be recognised as being a famous fan writer. I can see no reason other than that to explain why some people currently writing in fanzines are so highly regarded.

As I may have suggested earlier on in this issue, I do not get to see that many fanzines these days. On the whole I don't mind too much for some of the US ones that I do get are very dull and it has for a long time seemed to me that all American fanzines are in the same mould and any new faned starting off will be tempted into the mould where it is safe and everything is much easier to do since you can see that everybody else is doing it too and you feel at home. The trouble with that is that unfortunately the writing tends to follow the same trend and before you know it one fanzine that you pick up reads so much like the one before it that the separation between them dulls.

The advantage of this system is that when something which is either of a different style or which is a superior bit of work out of the mould, it instantly grabs your attention. There aren't too many fanzines which do that.

Anyhow, this is the last line....

KAPTU



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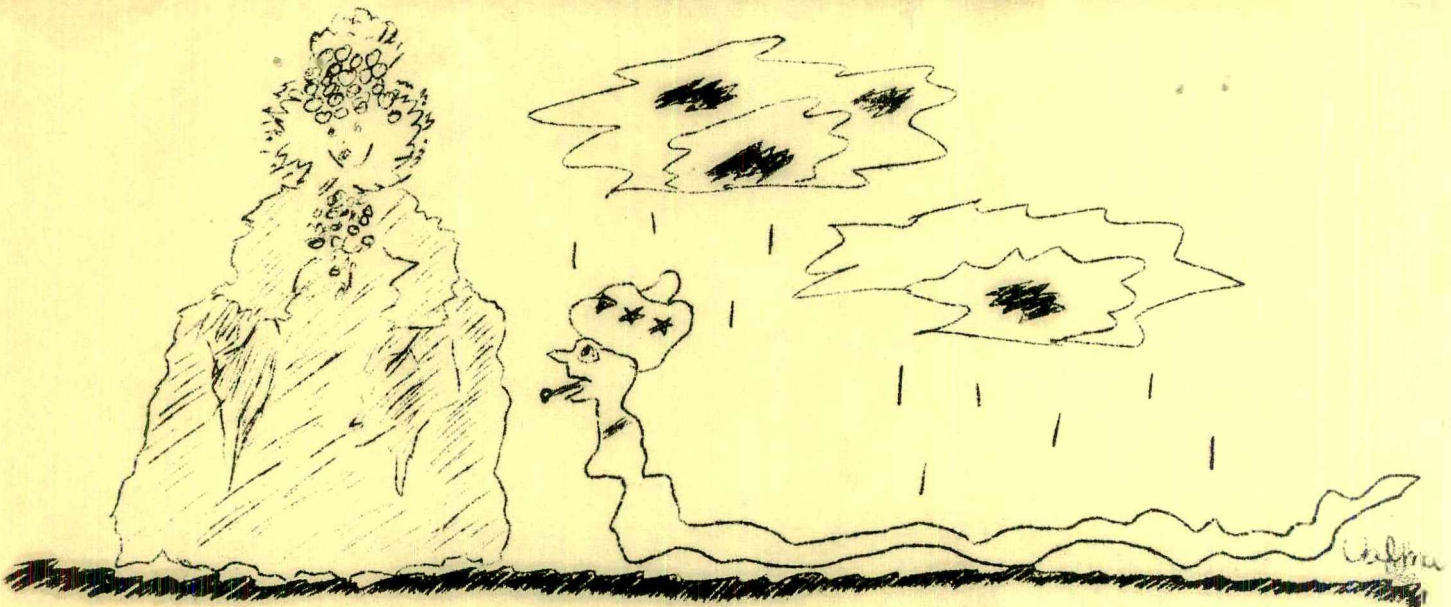
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