

Number 2
April 1974

RITBLAT / GRIM NEWS
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UP AGAINST THE WALL, PUNKS!

Well it sure has been a bit of a panic since the last issue, most of it occasioned by you bastards you there. First of all virtually no-one responded, then when they did it was fucking ages past the deadline and everything had to be either re-done or end up looking something rather worse than the average issue of MADCAP. Still, things weren't so bad in the end, considering the almost 25% response was almost uniformly good; but there were a lot of ungrateful punks who couldn't even see their way to say 'thanx but no thanx'. Even famous Doctored Darrol Pardoe didn't even send his copy back with a note saying 'Please do not send me any further issues of your fanzine.', but someone called Mercer did, so that evens things out, I imagine.

Now I've never been too enthusiastic about sending out fanzines to people with all the appreciation of 150lbs of wet sand, so you'd all better pay heed here;

this issue goes to three categories of people:-

- 1/. Masters, Buddies, Henchmen, and Cronies. All of whom are of sufficient personal standing to receive any Ratfanzines without question. They are also those from whom some response would be most welcome.
- 2/. Fanzine publishers. I'm assuming we trade. If this is not so someone had better mention it to me.
- 3/. People who are in fandom and might be interested in this fanzine. Several people here got R/GN 1 and didn't respond; they've been axed, and more will follow unless they respond in some fashion.

YOUR number appears next to your name. Pay heed. I'm a lot happier turning out a low-circulation fanzine for active and interested people than knocking myself out for an uninterested mass.

DOLTS INC.

Maybe the most horrific event in science fiction in recent years has been the advent of SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY. The worst beyond all competition ever, so entirely without merit it has a fascination all its own. The fiction is uniformly hack, pedestrian, dullingly familiar of plot and devoid of characterisation - I hardly imagine the worst British fanzine would publish these abominably uninteresting and amateur stories - and the masses of artwork have considerably less appeal than the poorest Marvel or DC comicbook. The three issues so far have deteriorated from bad to the astoundingly awful, and there is, I'd lay money, no possibility whatever of change. Myself, I think it's an amazing magazine - I relish it for the feeling of kinship with the early sf fans of the '30s and '40s it gives me, in the days when people were ashamed to buy sf mags and hid them under their coats or tore the covers off. It's definitely replaced HOT TITS as the magazine I'm most embarrassed to buy at a newstand. I also bloody hate it as a total and entire ripoff; from being what we used to think was a clever way for sf fans to hype vast sums out of NEL it has now come to represent a divebombing devaluation of science fiction.

Now then, in case all this looks somewhat odd coming from a hardcore fan in a hardcore fanzine I'd better get down to the fax of the matter. As I hope I don't need to point out further, anyone with any intelligence can see this is a totally vile magazine, not at all worth supporting, and worthy of only searing condemnation. Or, rather, I'd have imagined myself this was obvious, but not so according to some recent BSFA handouts, and a letter in the latest issue of S.F. MONTHLY itself.

Now, before we go on, let's all remember that the BSFA is reputed to represent the highest ideals of science fiction, seeking to present sf in its best form to the public, promoting understanding of what sf is all about, and clearing up the various misconceptions that have arisen around it over the years. Trying to present sf as a worthwhile literary theme for intelligent people. So they claim, every now and again. Why then, I'd like to understand, in a handout in the last BSFA mailing, does Keith Freeman claim (after enumerating in somewhat less than forceful terms some of the magazine's poorer features) that ; -

"...nevertheless, I think it well worth supporting."

And why does Graham Poole, Company Secretary of the BSFA, someone in a responsible position who might well be expected to keep up the BSFA's reputation and ideals, appear in S.F. MONTHLY 3 with a letter which says in its first paragraph

"was so impressed I just had to write a letter of appreciation."

and carries on in that vein, virtually uncritically other than hinting in as inoffensive a fashion as possible that the fiction wasn't exactly 'good'.

Now, either there's something funny going on here or there's not. These are either honest reactions - in which case both these people are entire cretins and ought to be flung right out of the responsible positions they hold in the BSFA before they do any more damage or betray any more principles; or this is part of some kind of idiotic plan to support anything remotely resembling a science fiction magazine being published in Britain. If that's the fact, this is just unacceptable lunatic hypocrisy, apart from being illfounded in the first place. As I've said about certain other dastardly deeds, either way they're dead ducks.

If the BSFA has any weight at all they should be standing out decrying this crappy magazine for what it is, making a policy stand, putting out for what they believe in. As it is that task has been left to the commentators in the legitimate press, who have been uniform in their cuttingly sarcastic condemnation of this NEL atrocity. Actually, I don't really imagine for one moment that the BSFA has any relevance at all to the publishers of S.F. MONTHLY, or the publishers of any other form of sf anywhere in the civilized world.

So why am I so uproarious about this. Well, being a science fiction fan is just like the backbeat - you never lose it. I still follow sf fairly enthusiastically, tho I refrain from commenting on it. More than that, I still see the BSFA as the tip of fandom's iceberg, and I want it looking as good as possible. Also there is some evidence these people do meddle in trifling affairs on occasion (Poole currently so with a 'Guide to Fandom' called - good grief - GENESIS) and I like to know what's going on.

So okay. Assuming, charitably, that both Poole and Freeman are not both doltish beyond redemption, why are they saying these things about that magazine. Is there something going on I don't know about?

MEMORIES, MEMORIES.

Sitting around trying to devise clever Ratfan words for Peter Roberts' Fannish Dictionary I had the unpleasant spectre of Silly Animal Fandom cross my mind like a deformed and retarded black cat. And it occurred to me for the first time in several days that it's not a generally known fact that I, directly or not, have been responsible for the whole depressing thing. This isn't a happy thing to identify with, so you'd all better read close as I'm only going to type this once.

Things begin years ago in Bristol at the Mercer residence one day when I'd visited them on the wrong weekend. There are those who'll be surprised that I once moved in such wierd circles; my only defence is that everyone was a neofan once, and they were the nearest, most accessible established fans to Old Haverfordwest. Anyway, also there were Peter Roberts (wearing his silly costume of orange trousers, furry waistcoat, and pillbox hat), Alan Chorley (of fleeting fame) and perhaps one or two others. Or perhaps not, as it was the wrong weekend, as I've said. During the desultory conversation (even then I had little to say to Archie Mercer in particular, and though I couldn't admit it even to myself - he was a BNF after all - found him boring and silly) I mentioned an item I'd seen in a MENSA newsheet reporting an AARDVARK hunt in Swansea Docks organised by the Swansea Young Mensa Group (perfectly true, incidentally). This was the fatal spark to ignite a torrent of puns, clever altered songtitles, lots of vying with each other to introduce the word 'aardvark' into any well-known phrase or saying - the more out of context the better, and all that shit. This drove me absolutely up the fucking wall as this kind of thing has never been my speed, and in those days I wasn't such a tearaway as I am now, which meant I had to sit around with a smile glued to my face and pretend it was all good fun. This went on for fucking hours between the Mercers and Roberts (who did indeed seem to think it was all tremendously jolly fun) until I left. Next damn thing I knew EGG had come out as the Official Organ of Aardvark Fandom, and my opinion of Peter James Roberts had slid down several stages.

That, of course, started several related inanities such as Wombat Fandom, which I had only the distant connection with.

The reality of the situation finally came down during the publication of FOULER, when I called for something to put up as parody of all these cuddly cretinacies. Something vaguely repellent, somewhat nasty, not at all warm, friendly, or sweetness and light. My main man Roy Kettle fired back with the RAT and there we were. First publicised in FOULER THREE, it actually caught on as something meaningful, and has become a label worth having to some people. My own offering for this position had been AXOLOTL, which was mercifully and luckily dispensed with.

The last thing to actually show up was to emanate from the North. I may be exaggerating, or trying it on a bit here, but as far as I recall I first used the label 'GANNET' to describe someone from the Newcastle/Sunderland/Co Durham Group and it stuck. Amazing that they never devised it themselves - it's after the name of the pub they meet at, the Gannet (obviously) - but there ya go. They've probably forgotten themselves where they got it from.

Since those grisly days Silly Animal Fandom has declined to The Rats and the Gannets, the Wombat people disintegrating all over, and Roberts at last deciding to rid himself of the Aardvark appellation, ostensibly because his supply of Aardvark cartoons has run out, but hopefully because he's got a little more sense in the last few years.

And there's no punchline; this was a certified Ratfandom Anecdote.

GOVERNMENT CRACKS DOWN ON FANDOM.

That's what it felt like to me when I first heard the results of this years first Budget. Postage (fanzines), Railfares (going to cons and visiting), and Electricity (labouring over typewriters and duplicators well into the night) all up staggering amounts.

Obviously I'm not going to discuss the general ramifications of the Government's latest financial contrivances (other than saying merely that I'm one of the most people who will in fact be worse off in the end, despite being in a supposedly favoured lower-income bracket) but just (just!) see what this could mean in terms of fanning.

And the most obvious, and worst effect is going to come in fanzines, no doubt about it. And fandom is going to suffer, and maybe some fannish aspects will vanish entirely.

What I mean is that it is now be almost impossible to produce, singlehanded (financially) a reasonably frequent and regular fanzine of any useful bulk at all. To take my own example, this fanzine at this moment costs to all intents and purposes £10 per issue to produce. And £10 is exactly 10% of my monthly salary, and producing a roughly monthly fanzine means this is a fair wad of cash disappearing; disappearing along with £30 rent (soon to rise), travel to work, food, various necessary things, and the usual vital stuff that makes life worth living. All of this means that I am ending up something like a lot of pounds out of pocket by the end of the third week, never mind the end of the month. And all this for a low-circulation, cheaply-produced fanzine. No wonder the more flash material like ZIMRI, BLUNT, and MAYA only show up once every three or five months,

And there's the danger; the fear is that with the likely financially-caused demise of the frequent fanzine these big guys will become the only fanzines, the only facet of fanzine fandom visible to the neofans, and in time their attitudes, their types, will become what fanzine are all about, and the essence of fandom, the call-and-response feeling such as I'm trying to engender - and can only possibly exist in a frequent fanzine - will go right by the board.

It's a true fact that people will not readily respond to the infrequent fanzines, and even when they do there is little feeling of immediacy in their response. News is no longer news six months later, any possibility of personality interaction disappears when you get comments on your material so long after you wrote it you can't even remember what it was about yourself. The vitality goes; lettercolumns are reduced to stultifying lists of likes and dislikes, there's nothing to make it worthwhile getting excited and slamming back a letter the same day you recieved the fanzine - what for, when it won't be published until next Christmas? It's gonna be a bad scene.

So we'll be left with the almost-professional magazines, which are ok in their place, and fannish a bit at the same time, but lacking that speed of movement.

Myself, I don't reckon it to be at all feasible to produce a regular, frequent (monthly or six-weekly) fanzine in this day and age, the money problems rule it out. A group could do it, but that's a different problem which would almost certainly make the fanzine something other than what it should be - a manifestation of one editor's attitudes to fandom. A small fanzine could make it, but would probably be so small as to be virtually useless - anything less than twenty pages doesn't offer enough material, usually (especially in Britain). So what is going to happen?

Anyone want to subscribe?

M I C K E Y ' S M E A T

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The guinea-pig reacted strongly to the illegal fluids Mickey was pumping into its cute little fluffy bum. "Jesus Shit!" yelled Mickey as TestPig 39A (Dispensable) sank its teeth into his hand. He smashed the small creature away from him, shattering its head against the wall and adding to his fury by splattering its blood over his experimental notes. "Fucking pigs," said Mickey, and decided to call it a day. He wrapped his hanky round his wounded hand and stamped out of the School.

His hand was somewhat painful so he'd have had a troubled night anyway; but when he got to bed he found his prick was uncomfortably sensitive also. As his last girlfriend had just left him for some idiotic Wimpy-bar waiter he realised he'd have to get a grip on his frustrations himself. Thanking the great vivisectionist in the sky that his left hand was the sore one he pulled the plug from the sink and the Playboy from the cupboard, then settled back to flex his muscles. As his member moved from the twitching phase (cartoons) to the fully erect (pet-of-the-month) he noticed something odd - two inches of it were showing out of his fist. Strange, as he normally couldn't hold it and see it simultaneously. That's what frustration does for you, he thought. "He'd really have to get hold of someone to take care of this business for him. Marion from the School would do, he decided finally, twenty minutes and one ejaculation later. He returned to his bed, sated but a little puzzled.

In the morning he leaped out of bed screaming. There was a snake in the bed. He swept back the blankets with the length of wood but there was nothing. Suddenly he became aware of something brushing his legs; he looked down and leaped off the floor in horror. It was his prick. His eyes widened and he began trembling. It must have been the pig serum. He hefted his enormous organ; two feet long. He giggled embarrassedly. He'd always had a big one but this was ridiculous. And he couldn't think of anything to do, a doctor would be plain embarrassing. Better wait until the effects wear off, he thought optimistically, might even be a bit of fun astonishing people in public toilets while it lasts. He started to dress for work but noticed after pulling on his jeans that his prick showed as a huge varicose vein. And he had no baggier trousers. Christ. He got some sellotape and taped his prick to his stomach as far as his navel, then wrapped the remaining foot or so partly round his waist like a fold of flesh. It looked okay with a loose shirt.

Everything went okay until Marion came into his lab. She'd lost her labcoat and was as usual wearing an extra-tight sweater with no bra. Mickey immediately began thinking of cold showers but it was useless. He could feel the sellotape peeling from his skin under the strain and his stomach bulge was developing into a terminal hernia. Without an apology he rushed to the toilet. There he sat until his prick was quiescent once more and dangled almost touching the floor. Unthinkingly he flipped it between his legs and into the bog for a piss. He gasped at the coldness of the water and stood up instantly. He had his leak then dried

..and all the little fans didn't know what to do.

Tall,slim,rugged fan,me,target of abuse by all the short fat insecure fans,has been sussing out the various alternatives to the Globe. Part of an intrepid team of sharp-eyed,highly critical and sensitive people led by Frank Arnold,we have visited to date;

THE WHITE HORSE & THE PRINTERS DEVIL

And I can tell you that though the Globe might be called the 'scarface' of London pubs it does at least have a feeling of comfort and humility compared to at least one of those.

Take the White Horse. We filed from the Globe on the 'two minute walk' promised by Frank Arnold,who,as he led us up towards Holborn was noticeably excited at the prospect of revisiting the first London Fan Gathering Place. We walked and walked...and myself and up-and-coming writers John Jarrold and Andrew Stephenson indulged in some harmless story-Plotting. We'd each plotted a novel by the time our guide decided he'd missed the turning. Catching the bus at the end of the Pier we returned to London and found that a HUGE building had been built on a patch of waste land since the last Lon-Fans had gathered at the White Horse. This was the Daily Mirror Building,which we kicked as we filed up the narrow alleyway to the pub,which lies within 60 seconds of the Globe.

Frank did a double-take as we entered the plush,airconditioned interior. "It used to be old and scruffy like the Globe." he assured us as we sat and looked at the multicolored windows, sparkling bottles,and barman. It was small,cosy,respectable,expensive,need I say more. The old ghosts were not there to greet us. There was no youthful Lou Mordecai,walking through walls with a tray full of pints and beer-spattered 'Authentic's'. There was no youthful Clarke,dribbling shandy down his British Interplatetary Society tie as he enthused about 'satellites' and 'monoliths' and how he one day hoped to go to Ceylon for a holiday.

There was just the coolness of the staff,the refined conversation of the few patrons,and the noisy babble of US as we voted thmsdown and trooped out leaving perplexity and unfinished drinks.

Shortly after Christmas we visited the PRINTERS DEVIL,the next pub along that same hidden alleyway . A 'printers devil' by the way,was the poor bastard who would sort out the print for blocking up before the time of Linotype. He'd be initiated into the printing trade by having his face squirted with printers ink. With such combined responsibility and jokiness behind it the place should have been ideal for sf fans.

It was. I lounged in that bar and felt right at home. Mind you,I didn't drink there,and so didn't feel the pinch of the extra penny on a pint that the London University SF Society people,with us that night,seemed to feel of high importance in giving the place a thumbsdown.

But for that extra penny you got a long wide room,lotsa chairs,tables,corners to hide in,an overflow room at one end still comfortably within the gathering-place,two nude pictures,friendly service, nearness to tubes,a pub that was bright,clean,but not pompous.

I'm much afraid,however,that the youthful looking L.U. students,a mixture of grease and boobs with precious little attempt made at sensible conversation,have swayed the feeling away from the Printers Devil. After all,a penny a pint is sixpence more per night! Impossible!

f a n z i n e

r e v i e w s

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E Y E B A L L

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Ok. Right on in this time...

HAVERINGS 57; from ETHEL LINDSAY, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey.

Now then, here's one to bite down hard on. HAVERINGS is a publication that for a long time now I've been happy to ignore, letting it go its own little way with no recognition other than sending in whatever fanzines I published to be included in what I assumed was the only complete and fairly regular fanzine listing. Previous to that, of course, like everyone else new to fandom I'd used it as a source book, but since narrowing down my interest to British fanzines I've tended to entirely discard HAVERINGS with its massive preponderance of foreign material. Anyway, prompted by the beginnings of an urge to study in some form or fashion most types of fanzine reviewers (and one other thing I'll mention in a short while) I decided it might be a good idea to get hold of a copy and see what's going on. And my word, it's a right naff old stream of effluent that's emanating from Courage House these days, indeed it is.

Quite apart from the blotchiness of reproduction and the incredibly cramped layout (cramped despite there being a good two or three inches left clear on most pages) the words themselves are dire. Maybe if I could figure out just why this publication is produced I'd be able to relate to it a little more productively, but as it is there seems to be a choice of three, and not one of them is fulfilled to any useful purpose so I'm no wiser anyway. As far as I can perceive there could be any one of three reasons for this fanzine; for posterity, for the benefit of the fanzine editors, or for general information. If it's the first then that doubtful phantasm will have as warped a picture of contemporary fandom as it would if it relied solely on Old Man Wertham's execrable WORLD OF FANZINES. If it's for the benefit of the various editors there must be a lot of people either very generous friends of Ethel's, or content with very little rather than nothing at all. If it's the third how come the editor is so slipshod in production and proofreading - many mistakes in things as elementarily vital as addresses - , why no mention of the many fanzines she doesn't receive (my man Roberts informs me he receives at least one third more fanzines than Ethel Lindsay in any comparable period), or if that's impossible - as I concede it is - why doesn't she make some reasonable effort to cover adequately, interestingly, and without bungling, one manageable sector of fanzine publishing. And why on earth she has the idea that half a dozen lines of idiosyncratic comment convey anything of the essence of any individual fanzine I just cannot comprehend.

OK, now I think that Lindsay intends this mainly as a means of comment to editors, with the general information angle coming in as an incidental second. In which case there's something funny going on wrong.

Okay, and now for the other reason why I happened quite casually onto a review of this fanzine. Of course of course it was the review of the first issue of TRUE RAT in this issue. Lindsay totally bombed it, but for entirely the wrong reasons. An entirely misconceived review, presenting an entirely wrong picture of the fanzine, its editor, and anyone

involved either directly or indirectly with it. Insulting to the editor and anyone else involved by being a vehicle for inane comments without any attempt at understanding. Myself, I gave RAT something less than an adulatory review, and it did fail appreciably as a viable fanzine, but not at all for the reasons Lindsay slaps on it. RAT failed by having little variety and no incitement for comment; not because it was in any way badly written or trivial. Lindsay's review, however, is the product of a mind that does not, and is entirely unwilling to, comprehend anything remotely dissimilar to the norm in style or content. Her drivelling comments are, in fact, the foolish outpourings of someone once part of the greater mass of fandom now finding themselves on its dissolving fringes, somehow managing to struggle to remain within, yet simultaneously almost contemptuously dismissing anything 'new'.

Just to point out a few of Lindsay's more ridiculous remarks;

in recent times she has complained of the lack of characterisation of fans in current fanwriting (in contrast to that done in the old days, from which an stute reading of fanzines leaves me with the splendidly detailed character-sketch of Ethel Lindsay as small, female, and Scottish.). Odd, then, that she should slight over the Kettle convention report in RAT by saying

"it concentrates on 'witty' dialogue between a few young male fans. Apparently they all got intoxicated. Big deal."

Maybe I'm seeing too much, but to me the first two-hundred words of that conreport set out a fine piece of character-delineation that is both vivid and true to life; sure, the persons involved are seen as little more than caricatures of themselves at that point, but wouldn't it be bloody miserable if every fiction or documentary was preceded by a precis of the characters involved. This was the first section of a long report which, unless I'm very mistaken, set out to be more a semi-fiction involving four reasonable well-known fans of today in various archetypal fannish situations (using a real con as the basis) which would involve all their various real characters, strengths, weaknesses, successes and failures. Fucking hell, if the fact is they spent the journey and most of the first night of the con closely allied to the demon alcohol then that's what happens. It's hardly so much the fact that they got drunk that matters, but what they saw, heard, and did at the time that's important.

There's a lot more erroneous comment - an amazing amount of it considering the brevity of the review - including the reviewer mistaking a parody of the 'True Confessions' writing style for a hymn of lust for Lisa Conesa, but I think enuff's enuff.

It's my firm belief that Lindsay passed over this fanzine as something she definately wasn't interested in, probably because it was produced by a 'non-person', someone apart from the usual run of the fannish establishment. She just couldn't be bothered to try reading it with anything remotely like a sympathetic eye and so proceeded to sneer at it without a second thought. This is surely pitiful; myself, I'm not interested in American fandom to any visible degree, but I think I'm capable of doing the reasonable thing, and not making any comment on things I don't want to understand. If you can't see don't describe. But then I haven't allowed myself to be committed to producing comment on every fanzine I get, irrespective.

The inconcievable hell of it is that Lindsay praises Malcolm Edwards' MAGIC PUDDING highly, hoping to see it continue. A strange judgement as she doesn't seem to have read it too well, or she'd have seen Malcolm's praise of the TRUE RAT conrep. If I see someone whose judgement I respect praise something I've ignored I usually take another look. Not so Lindsay. Maybe she's content to take things on face value

and dole out the laurels to the more conventional fans and fanzines and to hell with the rest. Rugged..

Something else in the TRUE RAT review that annoyed me, and is also another symptom of Lindsay's anachronistic fannish world, is the way she waved the name of Bob Coulson (an American fan reputedly a tough fanzine reviewer) around like some kind of magic club. "I shudder as a British fan to think that this may have been sent to Bob Coulson," she says. Well, bullshit of course. I doubt there's anyone who has become active in British fandom in the last few years to whom Coulson's fanzine reviewers mean as much as a fart in a hurricane. Myself, if I was at all concerned with foreign fandom I'd be a damn sight more concerned at the impact some erroneous misrepresentatory shit like HAVERINGS would have.

However much it looks like it I'm not merely turning on HAVERINGS as a result of the RAT review. As far as I can see all the reviews - whilst they aren't as scathing - are as uninformative and useless, regardless of the fanzines being reviewed. I'm no wiser as to the flavour and content of foreign fanzines I'd never heard of reviewed herein than I was before I'd read the reviews. Lindsay's opinions are as blank and white as you can get - hardly anything more than the standard form for a useless LoC - "I liked A but I didn't like B". Maybe I'm wrong but I think there are several current British fanzines that don't appear here either - certainly it's a fact that most people question the value of sending copies for inclusion. And it's easy to see why, there is no apparent purpose to this fanzine. If it were an honest attempt at reviewing fanzines on a reasonable scale of values, yes, I could get behind it, but there seems no sense at work here. Especially if you want any indication of current trends, capabilities, or just bibliographic details of British fandom. Jesus.

Like several others I could mention Ethel Lindsay seems to be a onetime BNF a little out of place in the present but unwilling to make adjustments or drop out entirely. Unwilling to let go of a long-time hobby. Nothing wrong in that, and no-one wants to throw anyone out of fandom, but fucking Jesus Christ, it really pisses me off to see fanzines treated with such shallow lack of consideration as they are here, especially as in some arcane and unbelievable fashion Lindsay is often pedestalled as some Great Repository of Fannish Knowledge. Whatever anyone might say this is a lousy fanzine, insulting in concept and actuality to everyone in fandom, and certainly no substitute for a review column.

I'd just as soon see a boycott on HAVERINGS, but I suppose that's a little fanciful, isn't it.

MALFUNCTION 5 ; from PETER PRESFORD, 10 Dalkeith Road, South Reddish,
Stockport, SK5 7EY

Once again the almost worst fanzine in Britain bounds off the press a scant five months after its predecessor. Not bad going for a cretin. Unfortunately every succeeding issue seems to bear out my feeling that although it has all the basic ingredients of a latterday FOULER it will never attract anything like reader-loyalty and is totally foredoomed. The only way to produce a shoddy fallabout fanzine like this with any success is to get everyone mucking in hysterically, content to make fools of themselves at haphazard, generally contributing a lot of worth and entertainment between the lines. However, maybe Presford isn't a strong enough keystone to pull all this together.

A fine and glaring example of P.E.P.'s lack of

imagination is the fron 'cover'. A mass of repetitive drivel with no use not consequence at all,almost as if he were determined to produce the worst possible aspect for his fanzine as possible.

Apart from Presford and a few letters (the letters almost indistinguishable from Presford due to his total lack of acknowledgement for the laws of separation and layout) the only contribution herein is a convention report from Ritchie Smith. A conrep of Bristol '73. Nice to see they're keeping up the old fannish traditions. As one might imagine knowing it's been rejected from HELL (and what's happened to that inauspicious fanzine, incidentally?) Smith's piece isn't too good. Sort of non-written, really, in Smith's distinctively undisciplined and egocentric style. Innately posturing and pretentious he can't keep to the thread of things without a few asides designed no doubt to show that he's not just another blockheaded fan obsessed with fanning, conventions, fanzines, and all that ephemeral crap. Too many clever allusions and inclusions and not enough atmosphere and fannishness, not enough anything at all really, apart from Ritchie Smith, of which I'm inclined to say there is too much. If he were a real fan it wouldn't be too bad, but honestly an outsider can't write a good conrep unless his name is Charlie Platt. Still, this thing did bring out a few memories, which is all a conrep needs to do in the end, and it did quicken the pulse a bit ready for the next one, so not so bad eh?

However MALFUNCTION isn't all bad. Presford still impresses me with his interest in fannish affairs. In a fanzine with every appearance of being hastily cobbled together in a weekend some of his thoughts on fandom stand out as having at least some minutes concentrated effort behind them. If only he'd get himself together and tidy up the layout a bit, at least give people a chance to see who is saying what about which, things wouldn't be so bad. I'm quite convinced that the sheer cruddy appearance of MALFUNCTION is even more instrumental than Presford's illiteracy and frequent lapses of intelligence in giving the fanzine a bad name. There's a definite difference between producing a fanzine economically of time and money - as I try to do with little success - and producing it badly.

Even though Presford has little reputation down here - admittedly amongst people who are hardly committed to fandom at all - I'd still like to see this fanzine move on up. I might even get around to doing something about it some day.

MASTER OF TIME AND SPACE?

Well, no actually, not me. The fax are that time and space have conspired against me and there are several fanzines in hand and no time nor space to do them anything like justice.

QWERTYUIOP from Sammy Long appeared after a long time, and amused for a while as usual.

TILL THE COWS COME HOME is the title of a rather insubstantial fanzine from Alan Barrie Stewart and his wife Elke which will probably improve rapidly.

L'il Malcolm Edwards was responsible for another fine issue of VECTOR, his last but one.

Terry Jeeves supplied another nice ERG. Several LES SPINGES fell into my hands from several sources other than its editor.

Most or none of these will be commented on fully in the next issue, depending on various things.

LETTERS THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED

((())) = The Master

!!!

JOHN PIGGOTT, 17 Monmouth Road, Oxford OX1 4TD

FOULER is dead. Long live FOULER. Seriously, why change the title? The only differences between RITBLAT and the average issue of FOULER are the transformation of the lettercolumn into ten pages of editorial and the absence of Kettle. But Kettle wouldn't be too prominent at the moment, by all accounts, and who's bothered about a HEAP when all the letters would have been eighteen months old anyway.

I have a suspicion that you harbour a secret wish, perhaps only in your subconscious id, to slough off your FOULER image and become more respectable in the eyes of fandom at large. Exactly why you should wish to ingratiate yourself with such as Jeeves or Alan Burns I don't know, but you must admit that to produce what is a damn good imitation of FOULER under a new name looks damnably suspicious. Maybe you're just tired of being ignored by them. Be that as it may, whatsoever and wherewithall, it isn't going to work.

I begin to believe you're only capable of producing one sort of successful fanzine, the FOULER sort. Correct me if I'm wrong, but you really intended RITBLAT to be something else, didn't you? I can only suggest to you that the FOULERS of this world are both necessary and entertaining, and as you do that sort of thing rather well why not be content to remain what you are...(((A cretin?)))

After all, RITBLAT was the best fanzine I've received for over a year, and I certainly hope that you'll continue producing it with some regularity. Already it has had a great effect on me. This weekend I'm writing my first locs for over six months, and I am fast coming out of postal games and back into fandom. The fact that today is my 22nd birthday (I received an umbrella and some handkerchiefs, plus a cheque from my mother, and a halfcrown from my grandmother) is a poetic addition to this change in my life-style. At least, Ritchie Smith might make something of it.

When I received your rag, Greg, I suddenly realised again what a lot of fun fandom can be. I'd drifted away from it a lot over the past eighteen months, chiefly because there seemed to be so little happening in the fanzine world. Postal Diplomacy was growing, and in my foolishness I believed it would be a good idea to influence such growth. I believe I succeeded; I think my own zine ETHIL THE FROG was a good influence on the new publications that were springing up over the country. But I suddenly realised, reading RITBLAT, that I wasn't getting as much out of postal games as I might be. And the cause of this I quickly realised was that I wasn't getting enough response. Imagine; I had a circulation of 96, most paying. 30p or so profit per issue, and four, maybe six publishable letters per issue. As Kettle and Edwards have discovered in a different context, I now discovered; the level of response just wasn't enough.

The following day I typed out a final issue of ETHIL, number 46. I telephoned some other publishers and persuaded them to take over the games I was running. I wrote out fifty cheques in one sitting - something I never hope to do again! - refunding subscriptions. If I'd had any sense I'd have just quit the scene taking the cash with me, but I guess I'm too damn honest for my own good.

I'm still only just beginning to realize what the hidden implications of folding a successful and established fanzine are. I've been publishing ETHIL longer than 90% of the others. Now, if some cretin chooses to slander me in print, I can no longer hit back with my accustomed ease. I must rely on the goodwill of some other publisher to allow me a platform. It's a loss of power, and a damnably uncomfortable situation to be in. If I'd totally left the hobby it wouldn't matter, but I'm still marginally active. I've made a few good friends there and I don't want to give it up totally. At the moment my name is still noised abroad - but how long will it last? Three months? Six? And can I settle down to being a nonentity again?

Perhaps this love of notoriety is the real reason why the bug of amateur publishing is so hard to get rid of, the reason why people like you or Dick Geis or Alan Burns even keep coming back to fan editing. Once you get established in fandom it's all too easy to get blase about having your name appear in duplicator ink. Let it stop appearing and I wonder whether it isn't quite a wrench.

And you did it, Greg. How about that...

" (((Maybe it's because I never have got blase about being mentioned in fanzines, and definately because it is one hell of an amputation not having your own safe platform. I bloody suffered without it, I can assure you.)))

I don't fully understand your attitude vis-a-vis John Hall. If you decided to publish a column by Holdstock vilifying, say, Alan Burns, and Burns threatened to boycott your zine if you printed it, what would you do? Tell him to fuck off, that's what. Yet when Hall pulls the same stunt it's you that climbs down. Why? Relations between you and Hall haven't exactly run smooth, and I'm quite positive that the success of FOULER didn't totally depend on getting a contribution from Hall. If you liked the original, why didn't you leave it in - you were the editor, weren't you? And if Hall didn't like it, then fuck him. He doesn't sound at all a nice person. Far too small-minded. Though I must confess I've only ever met him once in any meaningful sense, at Bristol.

" (((The point was - as you should have seen - I was trying to weld local Ratfandom into something more cohesive and functional. At the time it seemed important to keep relationships within the group as cool as possible. All crazy, all failed. I don't give a fuck who gets offended by anything I publish here, though I don't think many people would be.)))

Excellent EYEBALL. These reviews are, as you say, no longer unique, but in my opinion you can't get enough of them.

And the Burns piece... now that really is an oddity. When I gave it to you, many moons ago, I'd been taking it as deadly serious. But when I read it again, I had doubts - were these opinions really anything but an elaborate, overplayed joke? I'd almost convinced myself it was just a hype, with Burns chuckling to himself over the stupidity of certain younger members of fandom - but then my eyes fell on ISEULT and the vision passed. e means it, every word.

Ratfandom's ramifications look a lot larger in print, with that long list of names, than they seem in real life. I've always considered myself a sort of Ratfandom hanger-on; never quite within the group, but not totally separated from it. Although Ratfandom began as a label attached to a certain view of fandom I think it has degenerated into a London group. Every occasion Ratfandom meets - apart from cons - is in London; provincials like myself must inevitably feel a little isolated. The only way to alter this state of affairs would be

to produce a regular Ratfan fanzine. FOULER used to do it vaguely effectively, and perhaps RITBLAT may do the same, if you can keep on producing material of a high enough standard sufficiently frequently.

- " (((Which is what I'm trying to do, of course of course. The onus for providing good material lies as much on You Lot as it does on me, obviously. However, I do aspire towards pulling the scattered fragments together a bit via RITBLAT.
- " An excellent letter, incidentally. Makes me feel sorta proud and kinda humble that R/GN might have been the kiss to waken
- " a Master of Fandom from his months-long sleep. Now get out WORM 4 and we'll see what ya can do, kid.)))

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GRAY BOAK, 6 Hawks Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT 3EG

Many thanks for RITBLAT - a much needed fanzine. This is kind of thing needed to revive my at-times-flagging enthusiasms about fanzines. Particularly at the moment, when the British fanzine scene is so disastrously flat. I mean, I used to think that things were pretty bad before, but look at it now. Where the hell are all those fabulous fannish fanzines of '72? Your zine is bloody good and desperately needed - don't let anyone tell you otherwise. (((Not even the Archie-typal fan himself???) Don't worry if you don't get too many locs either. It'll take some time before Britfandom gets back into the habit.

Which leads me nicely into my first comment on your C6 review; the lettercol was full of fringe-fans because all these active superfans don't write locs. Which is one reason why Kettle didn't get many, and unless I'm mistaken, neither will you. Fringe-fans write locs to get in on the scene - established (small e) fans don't write locs because they are the scene (or so they think). I don't write locs because I'm lazy and have too many other things to do with my time. If you want locs send your zine to neos and fringe-fans.

Second comment is about your 'old and tired' spiel; I don't think you were too wrong (though I'd sure as hell dispute the bit about 'stultification of thought!'). I've been shouting about for better fanzine for some time now... and look at the results... sf/fandom has always been a secondary interest with me, and recently I've been more involved with my first love, aviation... eg has been taking up more than a little of my time, and on the horizon I detect Marriage, Mortgage, and (forced) Mundania. (((Three grisly fates for any intelligent man, I'd have imagined))) On top of this I find I can't do what I'd like with my fanzine because of lack of support/time/ability, and that I can't seem to find (yet - I'm still looking) a formula that will give the correct balance for a replacement - hence my hopes for ROMPA. In short - disillusion hangs about me, so if you did detect a certain lack of spark, you were 100% correct.

All the above does not gain a word I've ever written about fandom. It is not a transient phase with me, though it is going through a dull patch at the moment, (it's likely to get worse before it gets better) and it is A Way Of Life (or whichever phrase you prefer. It just happens that British fandom is a pretty miserable way of life at the moment, for me more than most... is part because I perhaps expect more from it than most.

All this is one of the reasons I thought your zine so good. We probably disagree on just about everything outside of fandom, but I meshed superbly with your thoughts this issue. Great, just great. (((Right fucking on, brother!)))

In spite of fervent attempts to stick to a Ratfandom equivalent of intelligence and restraint and the usual total honesty is the best policy approach FOULER will never be dead as long as the Yellow Pages go sickly on. Great. I thought the Burns bit brilliant bullshit, although it did sober me somewhat with the reminder that Alan is that one person I know who I think actually actively hates me, in no matter how a disinterested and impersonal a way. I hope he does anyway, cos he's the one person I can think of whom I actually actively hate, distant and far away though it all is. Dammit, the guy really gets up my nose, I'm afraid. Still, no matter.

Ahhh, Kettle's just the best isn't he? How he can't make lots of money out of it still seems rather strange. While the onermerely indicates, routinely, that despite Holdcocks and Maulers, Leroi is King of Rhyming Couplets, the other thing, WEDNESDAYS, was something else. "An air of patient misery"? As far as I'm concerned WEDNESDAYS stands out altogether from the mag. Honest, witty, clever, sure - but it has subtlety. It speaks. Hmm, you know it rather amuses me when you mention Holdstock in terms anticipatory to the mocking respect you total fannishness - quite apart from personal friendship - will require you to give him when, with novel published, the day of deification rolls round. I'm sure Kettle will never get the Kettle novel(s) written. I'm almost as sure all the short stories he might, by some trick of apathy, get sold in the future will be all suitably banal and uninspiring...and the very best he is capable of.....? What a loser. There's something totally unreasonable somewhere, I'm sure there is.

Cringe. I'd forgotten what a nice guy Goblin is. (Thinks; am I being forced to mention that I am, surprising though it may seem, not in fact anything like impotent, bollockless, a woman-hater, a transvestite, a pegerast (you and Brosnan both, eh Goblin?), or in fact noticeably a sexual pervert in Ratfandom terms, even not much more than somewhat homosexual.) (I think.) I don't even believe that Pickersgill or Kettle hate me, even if they wanted to summon up the energy or interest to do so. Now, mind you, my good buddy (at times suspiciously so) Ritchie Smith I suspect harbours serious doubts at times as to whether Pickersgill has, in fact, ever really forgotten about that little wine-slinging incident at Bristol and the eye-meets-eye showdown that followed inevitably. I suspect Biffo might have some slight basis of truth behind his paranoid imaginings in the direction of Pickersgill and his paranoias, but then who cares. No-one at all.

I was interested to read your little bit on Peter Roberts and his negative socialising. It struck an echo. Up here our word for the Ratfannish 'Peter Roberts' meaning "not to bother, not to come, not do, not like, or generally be a wet blanket" is 'IanMaule'. Altho being only a fringe or parttime Gannet I cannot speak with any topicality or wuthority for the group you would never trust anything I said in any case, so that's alright then innit? Mole is the guy who seemingly has no money all year because he's saving hard for his summer holiday which he never takes because apparently he can't afford one. I remember one occasion the Gannets went to the affair - just like the Famous Five books - where we all pissed around and tried in vain to get Goblin onto the Dangerous Rides. I felt duty bound to ogo on just about every reasonable-looking ride to keep in character as an over-flambouyant juvenile whose keynote is excess. Mole didn't go on one all night, presumably to keep in his character as a tight-fisted, bored wet blanket most noted for his lack of interest.

How much does anyone know about the Gannet anyway? Here's a few misleading lies and irrelevancies on the subject, though you should get Goblin to give a picture of the social group that comprises the Gannet sometime. His at least would be perceptive and believable.

Gannets are anything but birds of a feather but every Tuesday most of them do, I admit, flock together. The roll call is Ian Williams, Harry & Irene Bell, Jim Marshall, Judith Ahl, Ian Penman, Ian Maule, Henry P. Pijohn, Rob Jackson, occasionally Ritchie Smith, two new guys I don't know by name, and whatever women any of us might bring along from time to time. Boak and Mary Legg are honorary members. Harry Bell has a certain mantle of authority laid on him, being the oldest for one thing, and is the one most likely to be left holding the baby in any group undertaking. The sucker. He's quiet, urbane, eminently sensible, talented and settled. Irene used to provide much pseudo (pseudo???) sexual mileage for certain members of the group of some standing in the scheme of things until Harry married her, and now they either have decided to tickle their own woman or not bother at all because it's all boring and not at all interesting. She's nice, soft, simple, human. Something like a soft version of Mary Legg. Ian Maule is Superfan 1972/3/4 and probably 5/6/7 too. He resides in a curious self-imposed exile, the walls of his castle being of apathy and total fannishness in equal measure. He has pissed me off by not coming to Thom Penman parties apparently because they had a majority of non-fans, and even worse, perish the thought, women! And the parties weren't fannish either, all kinds of non-fannish activities taking place, all of which he complained about at the Gannet when I wasn't there. (Yes, I have my sources.) He has also refused, at Harry Bell parties, even to go into rooms where there were non-fans. He is in fact, probably as fannish as Greg Pickersgill in his own dedicated way. He'd be an okay guy really, but there's no talking to him. No way. Don't get the impression that I don't like him, by the way. Mole and Doc Jackson form a hard-core fannish axis. Myself, I think Rob is a little too rigidly inflexible, he looks straight ahead of him, not to the sides at all. Like most of us Rob has these silly ideas of selling stories to magazines, all that nonsense. Together with Goblin and Harry, Ian and Rob form the fannish contingent, ably assisted by Irene. Other factions are the comix cabal, the South Shields Writers Workshop, and New Guys etc. Jim Marshall is an entertaining and forceful personality, totally lacking in discipline or drive, and surprisingly enough a bit of a tithead at times. Judith Ahl is intelligent, hip, relatively complex, human, and far too good for a crummy bum like Marshall. Ian Penman is smooth, bland, competent, rather inflexible and impossible to argue with. Penman traits, but there's no relation. The link between Penman and Marshall has gradually lessened in recent times, and one sometimes suspects a freezing-out process might be working, with Ian Penman on the sharp end as Goblin and Jim & Jude become closer. Penman, Marshall and Goblin form comix fandom. Dave Bendelow is a hitherto unmentioned newcomer, although he suffers the misfortune of being outside the Gannet groups early-twenties age-group. His main contacts are with the Bells and Goblin, I think. The two new guys show alarming tendencies towards discussing actual science fiction, a bit more serious than fannish, and tend to pair off on their own. I don't know them, which is a pity, as one seems noticeably intelligent and the other is noticeably interesting. The South Shields faction, when present, talk at each other in their language of private joke, veiled reference, and undisguised cynicism. Quite subtle, but flauntingly insular and cryptic.

(((Down here we've always had the impression that the Gannets were as tight groupwise as an unravelled sock - rightly it seems. Must be even more disparity of thought and application up there than

" we have here. A pity really. I'm the type who really gets off
on a group-atmosphere. I've always wanted to be part of a
gang, or platoon, or crew, or some sort of team. Unfortunately
" I have this uncontrollable desire to be in command, and will
not be told anything I don't believe in.
Kettle, incidentally, plans to throw up his job at the end of
" June to spend at least a year trying to break into writing for
publication. He seems fully aware of what he's doing... I
hope. Myself, I'd want more support than two unpublished sales
" to VISION OF TOMORROW behind me to throw up my job, no matter
how crummy it is. However, there difference is Kettle can write
and I can't. Wuff.
" Atch, Ratfandom social life has improved recently, when the
Charnox instituted a regular fortnightly meeting at their flat.
I sympathise with Mauler a little, as being a social inadequate
" I too tend away from non-fannish company. In fact almost without
exception my friends are fans. Horrid, really, innit.
I hardly imagine I'd respect Holdstock - or anyone else - in any
" measure more merely for having something published. If it were a
good fiction..maybe...but that's another bag of tricks.)))

+

ARCHIE MERCER, 21 Trenethick Parc, Helston, Cornwall TR13 8LH

Many thanks for sending me your latest
fanzine.

You have plenty of things to say that,
in their own right, are well worth saying. Unfortunately, you choose to
say them in such an off-putting way that one tends to wish that you hadn't
bothered.

If it's any consolation, your bylined
contributors are even more offputting than you are yourself.

Let's get this straight. To refer to a
vagina as a cunt is technically correct, though misuse of the word has
given it misleading overtones. To refer to a twit as a cunt is definitely
(which is the correct spelling of that word, incidentally) wrong. (As the
saying says, 'cunts are useful'). Similarly, to refer to a man fucking a
woman is technically correct but with similar misleading overtones. To
use the word 'fucking' as a somewhat vague adjective, or to use meaningless
expressions such as 'fuck it' is just sloppy use of the language.

In fact, it's people like you who by
constant misuse spoil good words. I know that you, personally, didn't start
these particular misusages by a margin of several hundred years, but you
encourage them to continue.

I don't expect you to take any notice, mind;
but since you were good enough to send me this fanzine, I thought I might
as well try to tell you why you're wasting your time and money.

Now why don't you produce a fanzine
written entirely by Peter Roberts and Graham Boak?

((("Going to bring back the BLINDING PILLAR OF INCANDESCENCE
then?" encouraged Peter Roberts after reading this musing missive.
I wondered about that for a while, after the initial shock of
getting such a letter had worn off. But it didn't seem right
somehow; like kicking a cripple, stamping on a kitten. It's not
quite fair to set up and tear down this contradictory, patronising
drivel like that. I'll just leave it in the knowledge that most
people are aware of what a cretinously repellent old bastard
Archie Mercer is.)))

Coffee I yelled as the wet morning light struck my propped-open eyes. More coffee I howled as he waved the post in front of them. A Gallon Of It I demanded with menaces as the writing became clear and the origin of the blue yellow and orange package became obvious.

What have you got against us? Why do you say such nasty things about women who have the misfortune to be married to fans - quote; "Indeed, many of them tend to denounce Globe-going and other fannish events as second only to menstruation in their calendar of monthly irritants." Can one assume that your women have not discovered tampons yet? Actually, I find Globes come an easy first. At least where periods are concerned I know when to expect them to start and finish and how much blood is likely to flow, unlike Globes when I never know who's going to spill their Guinness, rum, or indeed bitter all over me. I realise, of course, that you yourself have suffered sad consequences of introducing your women to fandom, but surely it is preferable to encourage women to attend fannish functions instead of driving them away by peculiarly nasty male chauvinist comments such as fanning being nothing to do with women and there being nothing like Women "for screwing your fanning". I also get rather tired of hearing excuses for non-attendance based on the finding of a new woman who doesn't mind being screwed by a fan but who will soon find herself left behind when he attends some compulsory fan function. How are you going to convert the children to fandom if you don't convert the mothers?

Actually I enjoy Globes. It's the delirious uncertainty of never knowing who to insult next.

What about Simone Walsh then?

" (((Fact that a matter is I'd like to get a sort of 'special issue' on women in fandom together in the near future, so I maybe won't be too voluble about such things right here. Anyway, Praise beyond
" Comprehension to the amazing Ms Charnock for being virtually the only person to seize and respond to the multiplicity of
" comment hooks in R/GN 1. It's an encouragement to see not every-
" one out there has been dead for three years.
" Now then ; to hell with the bloody children for a start. Kids in
" fandom (almost more than elsewhere in life) must be the worst
" irritation since mensiliasis. Myself, I'd like to see kids banned
" from cons, or at least locked up. That's just the under-tens, of
" course, tho the ten-fifteen bunch are almost as nauseating. I don't
" like kids at all.
" Unfortunately for women it is a fact of the matter that they
" do tend to distract from fanning. Not unfortunate for the fellow
" busily burrowing, of course, but very much so for those of his
" henchmen who rely on him for anything from fanzine material to
" the mere presence of his person at some social event. which he
" is unlikely to attend due to 'prior commitments' (meaning 'she
" doesn't want to go'). Any outsider is a drag and an unwanted
" responsibility in as tight a closed circle as fandom; women are
" worse because they expect for some reason special treatment in
" this fannish context. Which isn't far removed from any other
" group context I suppose.
" There's nothing much wrong with women in fandom, basically, as
" long as they're other people's, or have worked into it on their
" own and know it was well as anyone.
" This isn't exactly clever stuff here, just a bit of crudnuffin to
" pave the way for a more detailed piece to appear in a forth-
" coming issue. With some material by You Lot, I trust.)))
"

First a comment on the piece I'm most directly involved with. That awful announcement about the Disco that was in Progress Report 3 - it's all my fault. The rest of them wondered what I was up to, putting that in. I was, as you suggest, trying not to offend the Jeeveses and other ancient fannish personalities of the type who put rock music into their mental dustbin along with Dirty Words, S*x, and science fiction. The announcement was the weak-kneed thing, not the policy. Instead of offending neither the rock fans or those with delicate ears I've possibly managed to offend both somewhat - the latter by mentioning a Disco at all when we could have just presented it as a fait accompli at the con, and the former by throwing in that silly softener. I think this is the only part of the con which we haven't been fully honest about in the PRs - I hope so.

One thing, though. You possibly underestimate the actual numbers of fans who would be distressed by the announcement that the disco was to be a full blown rock and roll show - we could possibly have lost 10-15 people and made another thirty or so pretty disaffected. We'll see anyway. You'll be able to request your own music, so we'll just have to see how many complaints there are afterwards. I don't really expect there'll be many. We don't expect to tone things down very much; we'll just allow the thing to go its own way as guided by requests. Rock music is not outlawed.

The tale of woe about the vicissitudes of trying to get a group fanzine together intrigued me. The idea of GANNET-SCRAPBOOK, its editorial policy in fact, was that there should be no editorial policy at all. Anything any contributor wanted to put in they printed. Nothing barred. Arguments about whether it should be introspective and boring a la Williams, or silly and boring a la Pijohn or Jackson, were thus stifled from the beginning. That was the source of GANNETSCRAPBOOK's untidiness. Any attempt to tidy it up would have been an editorial policy and therefore wrong.

The failure of TRUE RAT dismays me. It's a pity Roy can't be present when everyone reads it; the hoarse laffs would be ample feedback. The trouble is that although Roy is funny and deadly accurate in his slight exaggerations (notice the clever way I rephrase your review to make it sound as if I'm not just borrowing your ideas) it is impossibly to say anything about it at all without knowing the main characters at least as well as Roy does himself. Thus you have to be a Patfan to comment properly. I just hope Roy does eventually decide to do another issue; he's now got all our consciences pricked for not responding.

That 'Alan Burns' piece. It's a bit wicked of you to write a piece which purports to set him up as a little Hitler of fandom and then put his name on it.... It was written by him? Oh.... The idea of standardizing and deodorising, taking all the variety and balls out of fandom, is repellent, appalling, horrendous. Even if you did print it in a fit of sarcasm I can't see why you should want to pollute an otherwise excellent fanzine with such arrant rubbish, unless simply to bring to fandom's notice the enormity of such suggestions. Frankly, I think the article should be beneath notice.

Your fanzine reviews; once again I'm forced to use that wellworn word 'perceptive' (meaning you said something I didn't think of). I agree totally about the excellence of MAGICPUD, and also (though it pains me somewhat to say it about a Buddy) about the greasily overdone sincerity of SIDDHARTHA. I disagree about one minor point about Boak though. CYNIC was enjoyable, but Gray didn't show for me

quite the same control of expression that you found. I felt he went a bit overboard about the BSFA. That was all, though; I agreed with him about regional cons (more so after the Tynecon plug in SF MONTHLY brought such an influx of members), and with you about a fanzine writers/artists/etc award. If we have enough money left over from Tynecon I'd like to see us start one, though I haven't talked to the concom about this. One problem with an award like this is voting eligibility; should all Eastercon members be eligible to vote, or should there be a TAFF- type eligibility rule? Personally I feel the latter would be fairer as it demands more knowledge.

" (((Well, christ, you really lost control of your brain over the
" disco business, didn't you - including the piece you wrote here.
" You don't seem at all sure that you're doing the right thing;
" tying yourself up into a terrible agony of indecision. The trouble
" is that although we (rock fans) wouldn't contemplate staying
" away from a con without a disco there is just some slim chance
" some people might boycott one with such a thing. But pretty damn
" slim, I'd have imagined. Christ, it's only a small segment of the
" programme, and as far as I can see it doesn't actually force any
" thing out at all. And who wants to go to the whole programme
" anyway? There's a lot of shit on programmes I wouldn't conceivably
" attend, but it must please some people, so OK.
" Kettle might not have been so pissed off about the RAT's failure
" if all you lads had actually made enough contact to say you
" actually did like it. No-one really expected any particularly
" involved comment - virtually impossible - but you could have
" said something meaningful like "Absolutely wonderful!".
" I never find Boak's admittedly often hysteric diatribes against
" the BSFA unsettling, as as I say elsewhere herein, I agree entirely.
" Anyway, only a week to go.)))

+

JIM LINWOOD, 125 Twickenham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex.

RITBLAT contained some of the best Anglofan writing I've read for many months, the only piece of ~~boastful~~ pretentiousness in the whole ish was your para proposing the old banal idea of a fannish gestalt; most fans prefer Ratfandom the daisy chain way it is rather than a merging of its collective intellect.

RITBLAT's excellence was enhanced by the fact it arrived in the same week as the abominable ISEULT showing by contrast what Fandom is really all about. Your spoof article aping the thoughts of the unspeakable Burns failed because it didn't capture his manic style sufficiently to be believable, or go far enough over the edge to be highly satirical. The last time I saw Burns (over 12 years ago) he bore a remarkable resemblance to the late Peter Lorre; in recent years he's been turning in similar performances.

GRIM NEWS seems a worthy successor to CHECKPOINT; hope you can keep your lack of impartiality which prevents the whole thing becoming a boring court-circular.

" (((Unfortunately, and perhaps against its better interests, the
" bulk of Ratfandom itself prefers to remain as insubstantial and
" useless (and not even as decorative) as your daisy chain. So I
" can't even have the satisfaction of saying 'The hell with what
" fandom wants, we'll do what's best for us.' Doomed again.

GRAHAM CHARNOCK, 70 Ledbury Road, London W11.

Having finished the washing-up, the laundry, and the ironing I bring my loving wife a loving cup of coffee and find her writing a letter of comment to your lousy fanzine. What kind of deal is that? You've completely changed her. She's sitting there, eyes glazed, teeth bared, spitting out the occasional epithet like 'Misogynist!' or 'Onanist!'. And the typewriter must have depreciated by fifty percent since she started, fair wear and tear isn't in it. She never used to be a violent woman.

I did glance through your fanzine for my name, but only found it a couple of times, and then couched in terms of such obsequious blandness it made me feel I must have died years ago. Ah, when Kettle used to edit fanzines with you he at least said dirty nasty things about me. Thin skins crawl best.

Until your fanzine arrived I'd forgotten that at one stage I rashly said something about doing another fanzine. Now I've started thinking about it again. So you see, there is a Godrat after all and your life is not in vain.

" (((Wotafeller Graham Charnock is! Droll, witty, amusing. A real man amongst men! Poot.)))

+

IAN WILLIAMS, 6 Great Terrace, Chester Road, Sunderland, Co Durham.

SR4 7RD

Dunno how to loc your goddam thing. There's such a lot in it that bears replying to and commenting and - MY FUCKING KITTEN IS TRYING TO AT THIS LETTER! I'm not joking, he's hunched over the typer trying to keep out of the way of the keys as they hit the paper. FUCK OFF CAT..not that he can read of course. Now he's hitting the keys and getting his head in the way. I could take him off, but I find it quite funny really. Now he's gone off and pissed in the corner, just when I thought he'd been trained to go to a tray.

Before I go any further I'd better say that anything I might say about Gynecon can be taken with a pinch of salt. There are times when I think it'll be the biggest disaster since Hiroshima and others when it's going to be the best thing since Eastercon 22. Progress Reports are written by Rob, and I think tend to reflect his own personality. Draw your own conclusions. He's a fantastic organiser, but as a personality... Hopefully the disco will play good dance music. We haven't arranged it totally yet but the idea is to play good rock. As regards putting in a lot of new things, the vote last year was for a traditional sort of con. That doesn't necessarily mean staid. I think we have a pretty solid and interesting programme.

So Kettle is woman-induced fapitating?

(((Not any more. According to the latest Coad News Agency Report that near-matrimonial arrangement has come asunder. Sad, innit.))) I know the feeling well. Have any of you read the Fosdyke Saga books? There's one gem. Jos F. the patriarch is explaining to his future son-in-law all about sex (which he hasn't heard of before). Naively he asks Jos if it's better than tripe, and ends up flung through a window with the comment 'There's nowt better than tripe!' Unfortunately there is, and there is something better than fandom. If it's a choice between spending a day typing stencils or going out with my lady Cath, it's the latter every time. I don't think women should ever cause you to give up fandom. I know I couldn't completely, it's too much part of my blood even if I am only sporadically fannish. But only a woman takes my mind off fandom. Fandom is the second best thing in the world, which, after all, is still pretty good.

GRIM NEWS is an excellent idea if you can keep it up and keep it reasonably serious. In fact RITBLAT/GRIM NEWS is the best fucking fanzine I've recieved in months. The last one that made me sit down and write a loc was MAGIC PUDDING. I don't remember if I loced TRUE RAT, which was almost as good as MP which was almost as good as you're thing.

I refuse to comment on the Alan Burns article as he's bigger than I am and I don't fancy being beaten up by a cretin who says he doesn't agree with censorship but...and then proceeds to contradict himself in the shortest time possible. I can't make up my mind whether he is parodying a sickening attitude (something I do) in a dead pan manner or whether he means it. It makes Terry Jeeves sound like a leftist freak. ..Christ, where did you get hold of the thing, Greg?

Surprised you didn't like SIDDHARTHA 3. I thought there was quite a bit of varuety in it. Certainly it was far from maudlin masturbatory outpourings. There were fanzine and book reviews, letters, a rock concert review, etc etc. But mechanical? That I wouldn'tve imagined the last thing. ronicallly, I was thinking of changing the format, but then I got a fanzine done in the format I was going to change to done in that format because the writer said he'd have liked to use SIDDHARTHAs format but didn't think he could compete on my ground. So he did what I wanted to do and probably better. Malcolm Edwards is a lousy ratfink creep.

The reason I wrote what I did on your copy of SIDD. was that I wanted to see you back fanning again. You're too valuable a fan to lose, it wasn't meant nastily. Another point about SIDD. It wasn't an intellectual game. It was just supposed to be me at a particular point in time, neither pretentious nor mechanical. On the other hand you could say that just means I'm a pretentious mechanical person and you know me better than that. Egocentric, I'll admit to. Oh fuck, this is turning into "I'm a sincere genuine honest human person, honest I am really!" which is just stupid.

" (((Well, okay, you're not such a cunt as I thought you were there for a minute, but there is something just a little too intense about SIDDHARTHA (and, honestly, most of your 'personal' writing) that I find a bit too straight from the heart. However, more or less everything you say is eminently sensible, so it's usually worthwhile wading through the endless seas of gluey heartbreak. I didn't necessarily want you to do an all-new, all-song, all-dance con programme, not that I think it's a good idea anyway, being very much a fannish traditionalist myself. But it's always good to move a little with the times, which you seem to do ok. Anyway, we'll soon see what we shall see. The Burns article, as astute readers of this lettersection will already know, came originally from John Piggott, who claimed he'd been sent it for TURNING WORM (one of the great Golden Age fanzines of 1972). It all seemed somewhat unlikely at the time, most people here believeing it was Piggott himself being funny. It had mouldered in my files until last month, when I was looking for something to fill a page. Any loony nonsense would have done, and so it did, being good for a laff as well. It seems now it really was wri ten by Burns - the typeface (I checked) being the same as that used in ISEULT 4 - as I haven't heard from him demanding who the hell was taking his byline in vain. It was, tho, somewhat unnerving to see how many people thought it was a fake article written by someone under the Arch-Cretin's name. Odd. Incidentally Williams, you got it wrong. There is something better than women, and I must admit they never took my mind off fandom for long. But then I'm a little queer.)))

It's utter absorbedness on fandom is pretty much foreign to me, but was redeemed by those isolated virtues I associate with you; perception both intelligent and deep, and the semblance of honesty to speak about what moves you. Are you flattered, you little sod?

I was slightly saddened by the modicum of contempt that is the only feeling you seem to possess towards me, like old buddy Malcolm E. I realise that I may have got myself into a little personal altercation with you but so what? Friends (guess who) hint that I am the Pickersgill of the Penman-Smith Duo; kindred spirits perhaps; surely not the natural clash of class background, ideology, and such natural between Establishment and myself..shit, I forgot you are part of the Establishment, New Order In Things Dept.

Is it so strange to the cliques in London that beneath my doubtless inscrutable woodenness of expression, semi-Teutonic provincial accent, mannerisms vulgar and overblown, there beats a living heart, not to mention a brain sensible of its environment? Even you mention my poetry with quite unnecessary disparagement; the strivings of a 17-year-old towards creating immortal flowers of poesy, (overlaid by his boring deadpan humour ('I quite liked my poem')) aren't going to be held against me for many more years, I trust, anathema thought even the most veiled hints of literary ambition must be. Naturally, most of my best work went to poetry magazines.

THE MANY DEPTHS OF THOM PENMAN was unfortunately marred by some ghosts waiting in the wings; these offstage presences are Urbanity, Smugness, Copouting, and Good Sense. Quite accurate too, in an emasculated sort of way, but Williams lacks the punch of a really fine character-assassin. I can hardly wait for the counter-blast, Thom describes it so evocatively..

Another salutation to the praiseworthy Leroy Kettle, whose subtlety, humour, and psychological rarity-value place his talents far above those of a confessed moneygrubber like Holdstock. Jesus, the unfairness of things; if he'd ever read more Su Walton and sit down and take a look round and write what he knows, the hidden sad mask of the clown as well as the neo-Joycean quips, he'd surprise you all. It's hideous that talents rooted in the soil of third-hand cliches, banality, and the 'Boy's Book of Science' should be exalted over the author of MEANWHILE BACK IN GILBERT'S AGE, let alone the author of a great piece like WEDNESDAYS WERE ALSO VERY BAD.

((It ain't so much I don't like you, it's that it's so fucking hard to talk to you that shuts down the barriers. Just keep cool.

The Penman 'Counter-Blast' duly arrived and was the worst piece of fanwriting I've seen to fucking years. Sent it to MALFUNCTION.)))

+++++

WE ALSO HEARD FROM, and are indeed grateful to...

TERRY JEEVES, who assures us all that there was no St. Antony plot to ensure Peter Weston doesn't win this year's TAFF race, and who also enjoyed R/GN 1 more than I'd expected him to.

LISA CONESA, who despite giving her copy away almost immediately says she thought it the best fanzine for a long time, and supplied much handy news.

JOHN BROSANAN, who is not as dead as we'd assumed, who said "you've certainly got it all sussed out there, man". Right on, John.

I'd have printed more from those three letters but for the fact the end of the page is just about here. Sorry kids. Next time.

news

comment

G R I M N E W S

info

2

sarcasm

a newszine for British Fandom
.....

FANZINE SHIT

A variety of fanzines should be hitting the post some time in the next month;
MAGIC PUDDING 2 is due from Malcolm Edwards as soon as he gets himself together and finishes the stencilling;
MACROCCSM 4 will come out right after the Tynecon, held over due to Rob Holdstock's wierd desire to include a convention report, hopefully the first;
TRUE RAT 2 is now a real possibility from Roy Kettle, who has been encouraged by hearsay response;
MAYA 6 is entirely stencilled and is another fanzine due to appear as soon as its editor, little Ian Maule, pulls himself together;
COSMEG (short for COSMIC EGG) 1 is a new fanzine due to emanate from one Nigel Robinson, of 122 Egerton Road North, Manchester 16. This is definately the first fanzine produced as a result of S.F. MONTHLY, Robinson being one of the people who contacted Lisa Conesa as a result of ZIMRI being listed in S.F. MONTHLY's new page. Actually, having seen some of Robinson's work, I think it could be rather good, if a trifle sercon. He's put out a call for contributions of all types;
ZIMRI 6 itself will be distributed at and after the Tynecon;
THE WRINKLED SHREW is the newly-released title of Graham and Pat Charnock's new fanzine. It will appear whenever they get enough material. At present material is confined to several special guest appearances by the editors, a thesis on the Wrinkled Shrew itself, and a hundred-page index of PHILE;
RITBLAT/GRIM NEWS 3 will definately appear from Greg Pickersgill, despite the generally disappointing reaction to R/GN 2.

WHOOOWHEEE! PETER ROBERTS SURE IS FAMOUS!

Big 3 member and effete man-about-Queensway Peter Roberts has hit the bigtime. Nationally-circulated S.F. MONTHLY has requested him to be the subject of a full-page interview to be published in the reasonably foreseeable future (if the magazine hasn't folded by then). This is only the first of a series of pen-portraits of well-known famous fans. Mr Roberts is reported to have said that he'll do it if they pay.

WHOOOWHEEE! PETER ROBERTS UNEARTHSSOLD-TIME FAN!

Famous S.F. MONTHLY interview has been the lucky recipient of a letter from one Bill Harry, who oldtimers will recall as an artist of some repute in fannish circles. The strangely named Mr Harry lives in Queensway, W2, just around the corner from Peter Roberts, whose address he noticed in S.F. MONTHLY 2. So far Roberts hasn't had the energy to actually call and see the London equivalent of Don Allen or Harry Turner, so we haven't been able to discover whether Harry actually was turfed out of fandom for copying his widely-praised illustrations. Apparently in the twelve years since leaving fandom he has become a leading publicist in the rock and pop world, so all you rock fans out there might well (if you're fannish students as well) have like me wondered if the

Bill Harry often heard on radio's History of Pop series or sometimes seen mentioned in magazines was the same as the fannish one. He is. Ain't fandom strange.

IT AIN'T WHO YOU KNOW, IT'S HOW YOU KNOW THEM

But not to be mean and sarcastic, one must honestly give all credit to Lisa Conesa who has had a poem of hers selected for inclusion in the next volume of YEARS BEST S.F. edited by Harrison and Aldiss. The poem, EYES OF A WOMAN, appeared in ZIMRI 5, is well worth re-reading. It will appear alongside poems by W.H. Auden and Anthony Hayden-Guest. Nice one.

THE THRILL IS GONE

and the joy too, I shouldn't wonder. The tale goes that one Roy Sharpe, husband of Joan and half the editorial team producing that well-known fanzine JOY, got the Big Bullet from his job some time in the last few months when the Boss discovered he'd been using office materials, time and equipment to produce a fanzine. More than that we do not know, but if anyone's wondering why JOY 3 has not appeared this may provide a clue. Tuff. Snigger.

ALIEN INFLUENCES (2)

S.F. MONTHLY continues to wreak havoc and fascination. Letters continue to roll in to fanzines mentioned in the News Page of issue 2. Besides Bill Harry, Peter Roberts has had twenty or so letters from 'people with initials', and Lisa Conesa has had, I believe, even more. She reckons that "most of the S.F. MONTHLY readers seem to be very very young." A fact borne out by the characters now regularly appearing at the Globe in London.

Roberts still intends producing a HANDY-DANDY GUIDE TO FANDOM to send these freaky enquirers, whether in addition, or as a hasty replacement to Graham Poole's GENESIS fandom guide no-one is quite sure.

Any preponderance of odder-than-usual persons at Tynecon can also be put down to S.F. MONTHLY's pernicious influence.

ONLY TWO DAYS TO GO...

Yes indeed, I estimate in about two days from reading this you're going to be either at Tynecon or wishing you were. Last-moment info from the Gannet Squad says that the Saturday-night Disco is definitely ON, provided by a genuine professional operator, but with provision for requesting favourite material. There will be a Quiz, modelled entirely on UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE with Rambler Goblingroign in the chair, and Peter Weston heavily tipped to beat the Ratfandom Team in the final. Bar arrangements have been secured by the concom paying barstaff full rates plus after midnight themselves.

All of us at Ratfan Central look forward to meeting our various Buddies and Henchmen, as well as our other friends and associates. Gonna be a good con.

STOP TYPER....STOP TYPER.... Late Noos

Leroy Kettle the millionaire financier is not after all to give up his job to become a successful hack-writer. "All a joke," he said..... Latest Gollancz S.F. Competition rejects include Rob Holdstock, Graham Charnock. Still in are Vera Johnson with an episode of the Lenman Saga, and Chris Morgan with some rubbish.

G I L L O N F I E L D

Gillon Field, of the Birmingham S.F. Group, died during March of this year and was interred on March 24th 1974

Gillon was prominent in the organization of many Birmingham Group activities, and in Novacon administration. She was also the prime motive force behind the institution and organization of the NOVA Award for Best British Fanzine of the Year, an award that many had talked of instituting for a long time, but none had actually worked towards.

All those who knew, hoped to meet, or recognised her reputation as someone with an interest and enthusiasm for all aspects of fandom will be greatly saddened by this news.

Any communications which would have been directed to Gillon Field must now be sent to either Jack Cohen or Roger Peyton.

