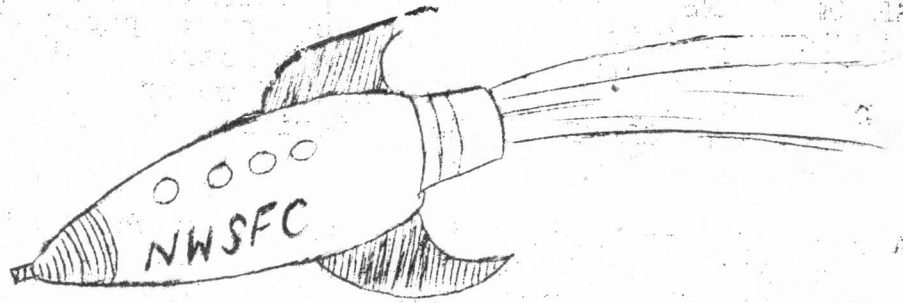


SPACE TIMES



TONY
Glynn

LOOK! REFUGEES FROM THE SUPERMANCON!

S P A C E T I M E S

The preparation of a "potted" edition of a fanzine is always a headache. One never really knows what to put in, what to leave out. Whatever you decide to do, you always find that the other fellow made a much better job of it I must make a confession : I have dodged the thing.

SPACE TIMES has too many 'departments' for any attempt to be made to include 'miniatures' of each one : paper simply will not run to it. To include one and omit another would be pointless. So there are no departments. Instead we present to you some samples of typical **SPACE TIMES** material. We hope that you will enjoy them.

A word of introduction to those of you who don't already know all about 'ST'. It is the monthly magazine and official organ of the Manchester Club, or to give it the proper title, the Nor'-West Science-Fantasy Club. The NWSFC is your host at this Convention. In our capacity as official organ of the Club, therefore, we would like to welcome you to the Convention, and express a sincere desire that you will enjoy every moment, official and unofficial, of your stay in Manchester. We also hope that it doesn't rain too much...

Strictly speaking, it is not ST's job to say this, but we would like to tell you that this combazine has been made possible only by the co-operation of the British fanzine editors. Each of the 'zines represented here has donated its material to the Convention. It may not sound a very big thing to do, but when one realises that every sheet represents a ream of paper - and that costs money - and quite possibly too some gems from the editorial collection, then you will appreciate the generosity of the fanzine editors concerned.

May we therefore make a small plea ? If you liked any particular section, why not write to the editor and tell him so ? Or better still, buy a copy of the magazine at the Convention. If you like what you see then, well, subscribe..... every faneditor needs subscriptions.

Here's hoping you have lots of fun.....

J. Stuart Mackenzie

SPACE TIMES : Monthly Magazine and official organ of the Nor ' - West Science - Fantasy Club.

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THE

ULTIMATE FANZINE

BY
VINCE
CLARKE

FANDOM IS COMPOSED OF OUTRE CHARACTERS, but some are more outre than others. For years after they've been active fans like Claude Degler, Derek Pickles, Francis Townner Laney, Bill Temple and such lead a sort of pseudo-existence in the minds of fans & the columns of fanzines, cropping up when an apt illustration is needed, (as just now) and being reminisced about at Convention parties, being held up to or having the finger pointed at. And some people just miss becoming Legends. Accidents, a quirk of Fate.....

Let me tell you about Gus Bickerstaff.

I came across his name in an old fan-address list the other day, and it brought back the memories. Augustus Brian Bickerstaff, to give him his full name, came to the White Horse in London for 18 months or so around the '48 -'49 period. An undistinguished, fringe-fan type....we thought. In his middle twenties, fair-hair brushed straight back, horn-rimmed glasses, neatly dressed, not quite sophisticated enough to be a bank-clerk. An insurance-office clerk or an architects clerk perhaps. Something in the clerkly line of business, anyway. It radiated from him.

He would come to the White Horse every Thursday night, sitting quietly at a table in the corner, rarely joining in conversations but evidently enjoying them, sometimes buying the occasional AMAZING or PLANET. He wasn't very interested in the scientific content of stories. One felt that here was the perfect case of sublimation, the quiet figure who dreamed of tempestuous adventure on other planets and in other dimensions. Bickerstaff himself was rarely disturbed; even when someone spilt a glass of beer over his trousers he seemed more upset at the resultant fuss than at the accident itself. He was the sort of fan of whom one only learns the given name; it was "Evening, Gus," and "Seen this, Gus?" and "Goodnight, Gus".

Then he failed to appear for three whole weeks. No one missed him. Life went on. Magazines were bought, sold and exchanged, borrowed.....glasses were knocked over, passionate arguments on Communism, Shaverism and other topics of the day were passionately argued about. If Bickerstaff had added something --- grown a beard, for instance,----- he would have attracted tremendous attention. The total disappearance of the whole just failed to register.

On the fourth Thursday I was sitting in Bickerstaff's usual corner, making some notes for a news-magazine I was publishing, and someone sat down beside me. It was Bickerstaff again.

"Hi, Gus," I said absently, and went on making notes.

"Excuse me," he said.

There was something slightly disturbing about this. People like Bickerstaff never take the initiative. I put down the pencil, took a drink, and looked at him. Rather more disturbing. Bickerstaff was dressed --- elegantly. Everything new, everything perfectly matched, tailored, the sort of thing that gleams glossily from the pages of ESQUIRE or saunters by in Mayfair but is never seen in a City pub. Only the horn-rimmed glasses were the same.

I paused for a moment, looking as intelligent as possible. It wasn't a cortical-thalamic pause, it was just plain bewilderment. And Bickerstaff cleared his throat nervously, looked around at the crowd of chattering fans and pros and said "Er --- I've just won a hundred and three thousand, five hundred and eighty nine pounds, ten shillings and fourpence."

He had, too. It was in the days when there was no upper limit to football-pool prizes, and Gus's humble two shillings had won a first dividend. He had the letters

For a few wild moments I wondered if Bickerstaff was building a space-ship in his basement. I wouldn't have been surprised at him building one, but the location seemed inappropriate. Then he walked across to the switchboard and arc-lamps blazed from the ceiling. The mystery of those metallic bulks suddenly vanished. The alien odour was abruptly identifiable as printers ink.

"Printing machines!"

"Yes, printing machines. I've got the very latest stuff here." Bickerstaff patted a platen lovingly. "Made quite a hole in the money, but it was worth it. Vince, I'm going to publish the ultimate fanzine!"

"The ultimate fanzine? With this?" My voice echoed and re-echoed between the huge machines. It came back to my ears as incredulous, awed, and somehow slightly horrified.

"Certainly, with this." Bickerstaff looked slightly hurt, but it vanished as enthusiasm crept into his tones. "I've got the equipment here to put out a terrific fan-magazine. It will have better stories than PLANET, better articles than AMAZING, it will have news from editors all over the world, photos of authors, everything. It will be better than FANTASY REVIEW, NIRVANA, and FANTASY TIMES combined."

"It..er..should be fun."

"Fun? Oh, yes, I suppose so. It will be the biggest thing the s-f world has ever seen. It will really put fandom on the map. I'll get it distributed at news-stands; I'll have it advertised in the national dailies. It will be big business. I don't say that we'll be able to do it all at once, we'll have to watch the capital expenditure, but I can see this being the fanzine. All the rest will fold up and disappear."

"They will?"

"Definitely....all the fans will be writing for this. Think of it...everything printed, coloured illustrations, professional...."

"That," I said, "is the point." I sat down on a pile of chases. "Look here, Gus, with all due respect to your ideas, I don't think that you're going about this in the right way. Fandom is...combined of a number of spontaneous individual efforts...at least, what I call fandom. Even club organs are not usually produced because of a mutual interest of members in the club itself, but because they are given a chance to express their mutual creative impulses. Sometimes the organ is the club. Therefore, you'll always get individual fanzines, and you will not get everyone writing for you because there's a terrific lot of pleasure in producing one's own stuff."

"But this will be so easy for them! Why, it will be printed!"

"And any fanzine that's printed loses individual atmosphere. Even typos have their part in creating individual atmosphere, horrible though they may be, and if you're going to have this stuff professionally printed...."

"Not professionally printed. I'm going to do it myself."

"You're what?"

"I'm going to do it myself. I've bought a book about typesetting and I'm going to do it all myself. Then I know it will be all right. It's a bit slow at present, but I'll learn. I agree with what you say about fanzines being expressions of individualism, but there's room for the perfect fanzine and this is going to be it."

"Run by the perfect individual, I suppose" I said nastily.

"Why, thank you, Vince" said Bickerstaff, flicking a blob of printers ink from his lapel.

"Oh" I said. I left him soon afterwards. He came up to the White Horse a fortnight later and tried to get an article or two from some of the professional authors. Most of them gave him their best wishes...only. But he wasn't disheartened; he was too busy learning how to set type and how to be an editor...from the books.

He came up again about two months later, told me that 4-colour illustrations were hard to do, and then stopped coming at all. The last letter I had from him, in 1952, said that he was setting the 78th page, but he'd had to scrap a lot of the earlier stuff because it was out of date. The address on his notepaper spelt HIGHBURY, HATHBURY, so he was learning. I should say that it's an even chance that in a couple of years he'll either be bankrupt or will produce the most highly individualistic fanzine you ever saw as his first contribution to fandom.

An outre character.....

A. VINCENT CLARKE.