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## 1. Bubbles Bursting

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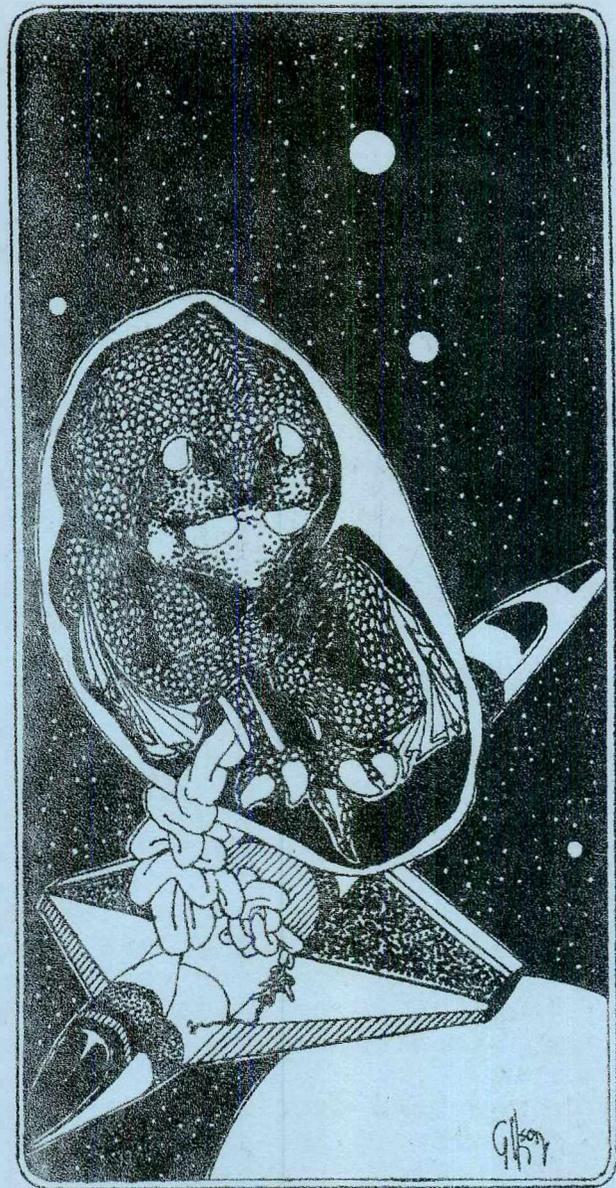
If anybody has five thousand dollars he'd be willing to turn over to me for answering a few trivia questions in the field of popular culture, do be sure to let me know. I thought I had found such an outfit, but evidently CBS caught up with them before I did.

For years daytime TV has played its share of game shows, many variations on the theme of greed. Like Match Game, some have contestants trying to match scatological answers with celebrity panelists. Others, adopting casino gambling formats, spin wheels, turn blackjack cards, toss dice and play poker for prizes which range from a week's supply of panty hose to cars or thousands of dollars in cash.

The ones most appealing to me have been the games requiring knowledge. On these shows a contestant's awareness of trivial information gives him a real opportunity to cash in -- unlike programs where contestants are picked out of the audience at random, or where winning is strictly a matter of luck.

My fund of genuine trivia (What was the name of Buffalo Bill's makeup man? On which arm was Popeye's tattoo?) happens to be very shallow. However few of these shows get so obscure. After all, tv relies on getting enough of an audience to sell ads -- few will watch a quiz show that consistently questions areas they don't even care about, much less know. So when I see an emcee asking questions about historical events I recognize, and digging into recent tv and movie personalities' backgrounds, immediately I begin to think how easy it would be to spend the money I might take away from such a show.

One hangup has been that most of this type of game show appeared on NBC -- that network is closed to me



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# THE SPEED OF DARK 8

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THE SPEED OF DARK Number Eight emits from the mind of Mike Glycer, occupant of 14974 Osceola St., Sylmar CA 91342. First page illo by Stuart Gilson. Other illos by Bathurst and Larson.

because my father works for it as an engineer, and to avoid charges of nepotism relatives of employees are excluded from prize shows. Then "Double Dare" began its run on CBS. Produced and recorded in Hollywood, Double Dare was convenient to apply to and tempting to get on. Its rules placed two contestants in booths which could be soundproofed at a moment's notice. The emcee announced a category like person or thing or fictional category. Then on an electronic message board clues to the answer were displayed one at a time. Whenever a contestant believed he knew the answer he pressed his buzzer and his opponent's booth closed up. A correct guess earned the contestant \$50 and the chance to 'dare' his opponent to look at a subsequent clue and get the answer, with an other \$50 on the line that either might win. His opponent, guessing incorrectly, could be challenged with a "double dare." Yet another clue came up on the board, and if the contestant believed it would not give away the answer, he could reveal it to his opponent with a chance to win \$100 more. The first player to reach \$500 this way went on to face three Ph.D.s and a new topic. He would attempt to find four (out of 8) clues to show the doctors which would fool at least one all the way through. The contestant who picked four clues and successfully slipped all of them past at least one of the "spolers" won \$5000.

"Double Dare" was one of the very few game shows openly soliciting contestants. One can attend the taping of most any game show and find out where to apply to get on. But, in the case of Match Game, the waiting list of contestants is supposedly two years long. Half your gamble is whether the show stays on the air long enough. "Double Dare" made the application process so simple that I wrote a note to their offices.

After three weeks a xeroxed letter came back to me. "We have testing at our office for DOUBLE DARE at various times during the week. To reserve a space for your testing and interview, please call (213) 464-3184 after 10:00 am Monday through Friday." Calling the number I made an appointment for the next morning.

Few of you have ever been passengers in a car I was driving. Those who have remember my infallible sense of misdirection. Ignoring the address on the letterhead, which listed their offices at 6430 Sunset Boulevard, I headed straight for Columbia Square, the CBS radio offices (also on Sunset), parked outside and went in to see the guard. "Yeah, we carry the show, but the office is in the Crocker Bank down the street." Feeling moronic I drove up Sunset muttering about what use was it to get on a quiz show when I couldn't even follow directions to the interview.

A handwritten sign opposite the elevator pointed to the office where, with eleven others, I sat down to answer a form with ninety-three questions. Who invented the phonograph? Edison. What is the chemical notation for table salt? Damned if I know. What kind of triangle has two equal angles? It's amazing how much I've forgotten since high school. Who was the Democratic vice-presidential candidate in 1920? If it hadn't been FDR nobody would remember. Who wrote the William Tell Overture? Rossini: thank you Michael Tilson-Thomas and the Young People's Concert. Who played Anna in ANNA AND THE KING OF SIAM on stage? Beats me. Who was the first black player in baseball? Jackie Robinson. Who is the prime minister of England? I can only remember the name "Margaret," not even half of a wrong guess. Who was the only candidate

of the Bull Moose Party? Teddy Roosevelt. What country is the setting for Turandot? You tell me and we'll both know. What was Elizabeth I's last name? Tudor. What team did Chuck Bednarik and Norm Van Brocklin both play for? I guess the Giants, then remember it was the Eagles and change my answer. What does the E in  $E=mc^2$  stand for? Energy. The last question asks "November 5 is Guy Fawkes Day in England, so what?" Smart-assed, I write "So it's not." Later I find out it surely is. Doubly smart-assed I add my own question to the end of the test. What is the air speed velocity of an unladen swallow? Answer: African or European?

The secretaries would not tell your final score, or reveal any of the right answers. One after another we completed the examinations. Several were told "I'm sorry. You came within a few points of making the cutoff -- but thank you for coming in." I answered eighty of the questions fairly automatically then struggled with the rest. When my form had been checked I was given a yellow name card to tape on my lapel. I had passed. Only four of us survived the weeding-out; all men, as it happened, though half the applicants had been female (and it seemed like more than half of the show's actual contestants were women). One fellow who passed, gray haired, wearing two-tone shoes and a blue suit with gray-checked trousers, appeared in his late fifties. The rest of us were between 20 and 30, student types. The man in realtor's uniform, and I stood on either side of an undergrad named Peter to have our photos taken on a Polaroid. When developed, the pictures were glued onto our information cards.

Secretaries, it seems, normally need to be polite for about twenty seconds: flashing a greeting smile they ask your business, and to their disappointment you actually have some. That's what singled out the staff at Double Dare -- very little receptionist's phoniness, and the appearance that they were more or less interested in what they were doing.

After we applicants spent some time beside the receptionist's desk battling around questions we'd blown (Margaret Thatcher!) a young brown-haired woman herded us back into the testing room. "We're going to play the game." With a tone that insisted there was only one game in the world. "Take a clipboard and pen on your way in. We haven't got the equipment to reproduce playing conditions. What will happen is another woman will read you the questions. When you think you've guessed the answer, write it on your clipboard and raise your hand. I'll check and tell you if you're right. If you're wrong keep playing until you get it."

Another woman enters with a fistful of 9 x 5 cards. Fiftyish, lean and blond, she puts on her glasses and begins reading the clues one at a time. "He was the son of an Iowa druggist. He was a lineman for USC. He became a film superstar in 1939." On the clue "USC lineman" I mis-guess Frank Gifford. Giff, after all, was a running back. But we all fall out of our chairs when the third clue is read. Three get it; the real estate salesman misses, but the fourth clue "His real name was Marion Michael Morrison," puts him onto the real answer: John Wayne.

New category: a person. "He was a former mathematician. He served in the Italian Army." Peter guesses Mussolini: wrong. "He would have

been 78 this year." We're still lost. "A bullfighter. A great marlin." I've been scribbling names: Marconi. Caruso. I'm asked if I want to guess. "No," I say. She's been noting how soon we get the answers, and how often we're wrong in guessing. I don't know what it means, but why be careless? When the marlin clue comes up I flash on Mr. Ryan's 12th grade English class and answer Hemingway. Three of us pick up the answer and the fourth guy bombs it completely.

She reads a total of five rounds of clues. "Philo Farnham and Vladimir Zworykin" on the fourth clue sparks 'television' from memory. In another category the third clue "He was a military engineer for Cesare Borgia" identifies Da Vinci. Finally we are asked to name a person. "He couldn't read without his thick, rimless glasses. By the age of fourteen he'd read every book in his town's library." Carnegie's my guess, wrongly. "In World War One he was an artillery captain and later a clothing salesman." Three of us zap onto Truman. One clue later the fourth follows suit.

All at once the simulation has ended. Pounding hearts and sweaty armpits and limber memories are all told goodbye. Granted no guarantee we will appear on the program, Peter is told, "We'll probably call you within two to three weeks."

A month later I got tired of waiting and called down to find out what was happening. "The show's been cancelled. We had our last taping last week." Oh, so that's what is happening.

Now here I am with nothing more to show for the experience than four pages of fanzine material. But you certainly may thank Double Dare for one thing: that's three-and-a-half fewer pages of book reviews you have to read in this issue. Meanwhile, if you see another show on the air like this, let me know. Once it's in your blood, you know...

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*2. But It's Not Like You Were Going To Get Away Without Any Reviews At All...*  
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EXCALIBUR by Sanders Anne Laubenthal  
Ballantine/Fantasy 25635 1973/1977 \$1.95 236 pp

I've developed a real prejudice in favor of fantasy novels chronicling modern confrontations with ancient magic, attitudes and religions. These novels are rich pastries of historical scholarship, literary interpretation and archeological corroboration. Ballantine hit me with a one-two punch the same month by pairing up SEEKING SWORD with EXCALIBUR. When the background has been thoroughly developed and thought-out, as in these novels, the effect is a comparison between modern man and his ancestors so far removed in time that their thought and beliefs have made them an almost alien race. SEEKING SWORD goes farthest in that vein, but even EXCALIBUR, with its preference for wizardly struggles between pagans and Catholics, portrays some interesting pagan fanatics.

Laubenthal, in EXCALIBUR, persuasively superimposes the Grail quest and the quarrels between Morgan, Morgause and the forces of light upon 20th century Mobile. She is a very fine stylist with several strengths, one being her ability to pick fitting images. Not every writer of descriptive passages recognizes the essential things which should be emphasized while other are ignored: usually the author simply describes everything -- like Katherine Kurtz -- hoping to accomplish with a shotgun what they

couldn't do with a scalpel.

What begins as Rhodri Meyrick's simple ambition to excavate the foundations of a mansion, suspected of being the remains of a 12th century structure, soon reveals itself to be a search for Excalibur in a tomb erected by remnants of Prince Madoc's Welsh colonists. The mansion's owner, Aunt Julian, lives nearby in a pseudo-castle, with her niece Linette, and a houseguest, Morgan Cornwall. Yes, funny about that name. Linette's friend Anthony, a Malory scholar, soon arrives and develops a yearning to see the Grail. It takes a little while, tunneling here and there, but before long the powers begin to struggle among themselves. The spirit of Morgan's sister, Morgause, attempts to mug Linette and possess her, green fire flickers over settings of Tarot cards and down the way Julian takes on the elder gods.

Though Laubenthal doesn't rationalize the way characters half a world apart can spiritually war on one another, or even explain where Julian gets her power (everyone else seems to be some sort of reincarnation, or in the case of Morgan, long-lived), she is an excellent juggler of symbols. The construction of her novel makes the story by interleaving episodes in each character's adventures, but in a way that other characters, through visions or clairvoyance, perceive and respond to each move as if in a complex game of chess.

My only complaint about the manner in which EXCALIBUR was told is that parts should have been more severely edited. Laubenthal pits the powerful characters against one another in mental combat: fighting to possess a victim's body against her will, trying to deceive someone to despair and give up his quest. Cerebral infighting doesn't make interesting reading. The play-by-play of Julian's powers being exhausted while she slumps passively against the altar goes on much too long. Overall, though, I recommend this book.

The cover artist for EXCALIBUR was Darrell Sweet, Ballantine's ace, who always creates exciting imagery and renders it in his personal style. This cover is true to form, though for once I wonder how well Sweet read the book. Author Laubenthal supplies precise descriptions and archeological backgrounds which he has burshed aside. Laubenthal's Excalibur has a plain hilt; Sweet's is jewel-encrusted. Sweet's sketch of the 12th century Madoc tomb features a Gothic valuted ceiling -- the Madocs left Wales in 1170 (according to Laubenthal) but the Gothic style did not become well known in England until 1220, nor did the earliest work in that style take place in England until 1175. It doesn't seem a likely style for Welshmen constructing an underground passage in any case.

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DINIAKOS & GRAHAM -- DOODLE HERE

# ECCLECTIC TRIVIALITIES

Nothing strenuous this time: more like limbering-up activities for the memory that cut across several areas of your reading interest. Answers will be circulated in the next issue, so write yours down and keep score on any inspired guesses.

1. In what novel was King Arthur nicknamed "the wart"?
2. What is Sabatini's novel named for a commedia della arte character?
3. Who (most notably) was killed at Roncevalles?
4. In what book did the League march through Upper Swabia?
5. What legendary figure, come to his sister, an abbess, for medical treatment, was treacherously bled to death?
6. Who lives on The Busted Flush? (Well, it won't be that easy if the person hasn't read these books. And if you're that sharp, tell us how the boat got its name?)
7. What literary detective figures in (A) RED HARVEST; (B) RED WIND; (C) THE QUICK RED FOX; (D) THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE.
8. What is Stormbringer's twin?
9. Who is the best bowman in the multiverse?
10. What won the Best Novel Hugo in 1954?
11. Lorg von Ray captains a ship in what novel?
12. What writer said, "I'm not temperamental. I could write sitting in the middle of Sunset and Vine with my typewriter on my knees"?
13. Who wrote poems about 'Spoon River'?
14. Is a krang a weapon or a musical instrument?
15. Two of the following are not time travel novels. Name them:  
(A) TIME OUT OF JOINT; (B) CRYPTOZOIC!; (C) DINOSAUR BEACH;  
(D) THE DOOR INTO SUMMER; (E) WORLD OUT OF TIME.
16. Which of the following has not been postulated as a founder race for life on earth (ie, human life): (A) Arisians; (B) the Hain; (C) the AAans; (D) Vulcans; (E) the Pak; (F) the Melniboneans.
17. One of the following writers sold the most stories to ANALOG during the 1960s: (A) Mack Reynolds; (B) Poul Anderson; (C) John Brunner; (D) Norman Spinrad; (E) Gordon Dickson.
18. Which writer in this list sold the most stories to ANALOG during the 1960s? (A) Randall Garrett; (B) Christopher Anvil; (C) Winston P. Sanders; (D) Harry Harrison; (E) Ted Cogswell-
19. Who was the first woman nominated for a Hugo?
20. No woman was nominated as writer of the Best Novel (Hugo) until 1963. Name her.
21. Few women besides Ursula K. LeGuin have actually won a Hugo. I would like to see the looks on your faces when you read who did it first.
22. To help you hedge on the question a bit, let me also pose you this question: what woman first copped a rocket for writing fiction? And for what (heck, it's been less than ten years...)
23. One of these is not a Travis McGee novel: (A) NIGHTMARE IN PINK; (B) THE SCARLET RUSE; (C) A FLASH OF GREEN.
24. Name the title of anthology/collections listed which weren't written by a winner of the John W. Campbell Award. (A) A SONG FOR LYA; (B) 2020 VISIONS; (C) WARM WORLDS AND OTHERWISE.