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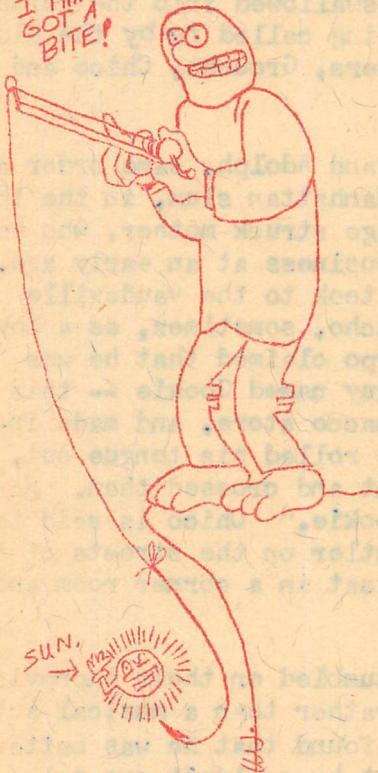




# STARLING

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I THINK I  
GOT A  
BITE!



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DON'T CRUSH THAT DWARF . . . for Hugo

PER INSULANDER for TAFF

NOTHING BUT THE MARX BROTHERS

Popular Culture. Last issue Lesleigh had a little article about Donald Duck & Friends, and in this issue they are discussed a little more in the letter column. But we've got such an extraordinary cover this time I can't let the occasion go by without pulling the following from my files. I wrote this in just a slightly different manner for a local underground newspaper.

#### THE MARX BROTHERS

First onto the scene was a huge foul looking cigar, closely followed by a man tilted forward at the waist 45 degrees, trucking onto the movie set with leering self-confidence. He has a huge grease paint mustache and heavy eyebrows, and he is full of barbed puns and double entendres. Then comes an unlikely pair: an Italian hustler, in badly fitting corduroy clothes, full of charming ignorance; then comes an angelic looking clown -- but a fallen angel, as we quickly learn when he chases a girl across the set -- he is hung with large amounts of too-large clothes, as well as a fair amount of hardware. Everything left unguarded is swallowed into the folds of his clothes, and he can produce anything called for by the plot from one of his pockets. The Marx Brothers, Groucho, Chico and Harpo.

The Marx Brothers, born Julius, Leonard and Adolph, same order as above. The Brothers started life in a Manhattan slum, in the 1890's, sons of an unsuccessful tailor and a stage struck mother, who was responsible for pushing them into show business at an early age. As early as the 1900's the whole family took to the vaudeville stage as a musical act -- featuring Groucho, sometimes, as a boy tenor and Chico as a trick pianist. Harpo claimed that he was first inspired to become an actor by a guy named Gookie -- this guy rolled cigars in the window of a tobacco store, and made incredibly comic faces while he worked; he rolled his tongue out, puffed up his cheeks, popped his eyes out and crossed them. Harpo is famous for the face he called his "Gookie." Chico is said to have learned the part of his Italian hustler on the streets of the slums his family lived in while Groucho sat in a corner room and read, arming his verbal wit.

Somewhere along the way, the Brothers stumbled on their improvisational style of humor. As a comic act rather than a musical act, they started to get better work. Harpo found that he was better liked when he didn't talk -- he said that he couldn't out talk Groucho and Chico, so there wasn't any reason to try. By about 1916 the Brothers had an act that was essentially the same style that they took to the screen in 1929 with The Coconuts, a very early sound feature. The Coconuts had been a stage play before being made into a movie -- as was the second Brothers feature, Animal Crakers.

A common fault of stage plays made into movies is a lack of cinematic approach -- stage plays tend to be limited and static while movies demand scope and movement. The Brothers transcended this

common problem of the early sound film -- their style was perfect for the movies.<sup>4</sup> Their appeal was calculatingly visual. The movie camera was able to catch in close-up the details of their amazing facial reactions where they might have gone unnoticed in a live performance. They were wild, kinetic, cinematic.

Also starring in The Coconuts and many other Marx Brothers films was Margaret Dumont. Harpo and Chico played against each other; Groucho sometimes played straightman for Chico, but it was Margaret Dumont that played Groucho's best straightman. Dumont was dignified, unruffled -- Groucho could do his leering best to scratch the surface of that dignity, with, say, a lecture on septic tank technology (as in The Coconuts) while Dumont would innocently hear him out, then offer another dignified straight-line. Or he would proposition Dumont in the most vulgar way possible, and Dumont would only be charmed.

Monkey Business is another wonderful early Marx Brothers film. There is a keen edge on Groucho's puns, Chico's ignorance has never seemed more like wisdom, and Harpo is . . . Harpo. He is especially good in a wonderful Gookie routine when he mimics the puppets in a Punch & Judy show. Later each brother does a ridiculous imitation of Maurice Chevalier, climaxed by Harpo who has strapped a record player on his back to supply the Chevalier song. When he is found out he grabs an official's rubber stamp and bangs everything in sight, including the official's bald head.

Duck Soup is many people's favorite Marx Brother's film. It makes a strong anti-war, anti-patriotism statement, and features fabulous parodies of wartime musicals with big production numbers and a singing and dancing Groucho.

The Marx Brothers are said to have declined around the late 30's. And their movies always had some problems -- only Duck Soup escapes having a studio-approved hack movie plot superimposed over the Brother's humor -- a gangster movie plot, a jewel robbery, a western. Like Chaplin, Keaton and W. C. Fields, the Marx Brothers were shaped by two main forces: poverty and vaudeville. Their routines were the essence of lowbrow, anti-intellectual vaudeville humor; they personified lower class hustlers trying to score some cash and class against an establishment which used the law to keep the poor down -- their humor was at the same time lowbrow and literate, ridiculous and pertinent.

\* \* \* \* \*

About out convention plans. . . we'll almost certainly be at the Midwestcon. And we'll be very surprised and pleased if we can make the Worldcon, but at present it doesn't look like we can. Lesleigh's school starts before the convention, and Boston is such a long way away -- expensive, you know.

We went to the Pecon, though. That was a nice one. Not too many people there, and the only program there was I didn't attend -- that was when they closed the hucksters room Saturday, and I had to use that break to eat. Sitting around the hucksters room selling stuff is a good way to meet everyone at the convention -- and this convention I was able to sit around and talk to fellow hucksters Ken Fletcher and Buck & Juanita Coulson while the customers weren't too thick. There were a surprising number of professionals there for such a small convention -- Gene Wolff, Philip Jose' Farmer, -- Buck and Juanita, of course, and Bob Tucker, wonderful friend and Starling contributor (though he forgot to send something for this issue. . .), and Gordon Dickson, who talked to me for a while about his new book, Tactics of Mistake. I would have liked to talk with him longer, but even so I found the conversation useful when I wrote a review of the book for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Favorable review, I want to add. The parties were enjoyable, and the color TV we had in our room was in excellent shape -- we watched some Saturday morning kids shows. Fascinating.

There aren't too many rock concerts out here in the middle of nowhere. Oh, somebody tried to plan a couple within easy driving range of swinging Hartford City, but court actions shot down both of them, even while people were driving around with pre-concert bumper stickers on their cars for these festivals that never came off. (I wonder how much of the court action was objection to the usual problems of sanitation and noise, and how much to the fact that the grass in this state is free for the taking and a very common weed? Oh, well.) But watching films and occasional tv excerpts of rock concerts elsewhere I find myself harking back to the days of early rock and roll concerts and thinking my how things have changed.

In a lot of ways. For one thing, I don't think it was generally necessary at a rock and roll concert for the lookers-on-in-authority to get excessively nervous. No Jim Morrisons to raise their hackles.

Good thing too. Tv has this marvelous thing called camera cutting and editing. Makes it possible for Cincy to have a concert in late 1970 and for tv to film it and safely run it on a local station. When Iggy went into the crowd they simply cut back to the broadcasters' booth (the concert was being staged in a ball park) and let you listen to the inane

~~FLETCHER '65~~ chatter of the so-called emcee -- Jack Lescoulie!!! -- on cut away fast for purpose of peddling show polish or Pepsi or something that will rot the dentine off your teeth while making them whiter.

Of course, back there in the stone ages of rock, in the early 50s, Tv wasn't wasted much on anybody in the young-adult bracket. Kiddies programs and stuff for the Geritol set. Sit coms. Bandstand and Shindig and all the other young-music oriented stuff came much later.

So we settled, as young adults, for films and live concerts. Films were all hoke: maybe ten name acts spaced out with an utterly nauseating love story involving a couple of icky young actors nobody in the audience could possibly identify with. The constantly recurring theme was Don't Knock the Rock, and the grand finale was almost always a big dance with somebody like Bill Haley and the Comets (at Turkey Creek Junction or some such place that couldn't possibly have met his fee) and everybody, including the stuffy mayor and grandma and the uptight parents of the icky young actors, dancing up a storm and grinning like apes.



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Concerts were more fun. Nobody there was being paid to smile and try to dance -- like the mayor and the parents in the movies. Older people did come to the concerts; but they were the ones who were already with us and didn't need to be convinced.

There seemed to be two major types of concerts in that era. The first example was the small, local rock group. Let's call him Joe Blitzen and His Reindeer, featuring Anita Papapopolus. This outfit toured the central part of Indiana with occasional trips into Ohio, doing dances and concerts. A concert was something they had to perform in a hall with seats -- which was supposed to mean everybody sit there and listen and no dancing. Actually, it didn't work out that way.

Joe Blitzen wasn't a bad leader. He had competent musicians and a pretty big repertoire. He had the gimmicks down pat: There was a flashy guitar player, a drummer who didn't mind beating 4/4 for three hours straight, at least four saxophone players who could do a choreographed foxtrot in place while honking, and one sax player who could "go" and ball his horn right on the stage in front of God and everybody (but it didn't matter because he kept his clothes on). In Joe Blitzen's case his outfit also featured a girl/woman singer, Anita. She was pretty good, but she was only quasi-rock, and typical for local performers moving with the tide from an older era. I think Anita was a jazz singer who hadn't quite made it to the big time. Joe let her do a couple of Kenton-ish things and in return she noodled a lot of adapted scat stuff to his rock numbers, a sort of Greek Gloria Wood.

There was dancing. Not at first. First, while the band was getting warmed up with a few numbers, we got the clap-along bit. But eventually the music got too good, too walk-on-it. If you were the sort who had to dance to rock, you knew enough in the first place either to get in the front rows or on an aisle. And mid-way through the concert you were out on the floor between the front row and the stage, or out in the aisle, dancing.

Despite the jitterbuggy stuff that was always shown in rock and roll movies of the time, people were perfectly content to dance in a very small space, not throwing their partners over their shoulders or insisting on carving out a figure 8 area for themselves. There was also a lot of very cool dancing, as opposed to the grinning-like-mad stunting in the r&r movies; even as early as the early 50s there were plenty of people here in the benighted hinterlands who could really feel the music, didn't need a partner to dance, and didn't need to carry on like idiots to let bystanders know they were enjoying themselves.

All this was, say, a college concert, held in an auditorium. The posters would go up around campus saying Joe Blitzen was going to have a concert -- not dance -- Thursday night, \$1.50 a head (those were the days!). The rock hounds would line up at the door. The leftovers from the Glenn Miller era would sneer. The Stan Kenton fans would debate a while and usually end up buying a ticket and thoroughly digging the concert after all.

The second type of concert was the touring aggregation. And they were something else, in several ways. Unlike the picture given in the r&r movies, these touring concerts were generally held in movie theatres -- not barns or gyms or whatever -- and there was very little space for leapfrogging, girl flipping and all the other acrobatics beloved of movie directors of r&r crowd scenes. (My theory is none of them had recuperated from filming Andrews

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Sisters; Stage Door Canteen jitterbugging contests during the 40s.)

There were usually a lot of acts in these touring concerts. Maybe two really big names, maybe four or five well-known acts on their ways up (they hoped), and as many as nine or ten small timers hoping for a break. Even with that mob, the performance as a whole rarely lasted over an hour and half or two hours -- allowing plenty of time for a feature movie several times a day in between concerts.. Convenient for the theatre manager. It was all due to the fact that r&r numbers were often very, very short. That was the day of the minute-and-twenty-second record. (Some of them very good records, which meant if you listened to one on a juke you ran out of nickles playing the damned thing over again often enough to satisfy you. Or went out and bought the record.)

The acts in these concerts fell into three basic categories and two big divisions. One big and one little. Importance reversed. In every tour you had maybe three, at the most four, acts which were Professional. These were the people who had been in business a long, long time, long before Bill Haley and BLACKBOARD JUNGLE. In a lot of cases, though not all, these professionals were black. In almost all cases they'd been doing the same kind of music, less go-go, for years before r&r became big time. But they'd been doing it before all-black audiences.

All of a sudden the color bars were falling.

But not quite.

What you ended up with was a segregated/integrated touring concert.

It was weird. Remember those categories, and divisions (black & white, and never the twain shall meet). In one sense, having a concert that combined black and white acts and starred one or two black acts was revolutionary, then. But it wasn't allowed to become too revolutionary. You bought your ticket and waited eagerly. Emcee. One good opener. One of the on-the-way-up outfits, usually, and a rouser to get everybody clapping. Usually a black outfit, too. Then on came a small time act; Mary Lee and Her Rocking Dollies. Mediocre. Often inaudible. Most of the nine or ten amateurish groups had a flaw in common; they couldn't project their voices and they didn't seem to realize they had to get up on top of the mike to be heard. So you heard the shrieking soprano lead and the drummer backing them up and not much else. Midway through this series of small-time and middle-time acts it would dawn on you, the stone age civil rights activist, that none of the groups was integrated. The Tour was integrated, but none of the acts were.

Black quartet; male.. Female trio, white. Small combo, black. Male singer and his combo, white. Female vocalist, black. Each carefully separated from the one before and after by an oafishly grinning emcee, who didn't know what he was talking about and ended every intro and wrapup with "And there they are, rock and roll fans!"

So the tours were integrated, and they weren't. But in every concert of this type that I ever attended, the top acts were always black. Maybe it was due to our backwater nature; maybe none of the big white acts wanted to bother with low fees out in the sticks. But it was all Crow Jim, very.

As a sample, one such concert held in a big movie theatre in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, had three really big acts, (two old Pros and one up and coming quartet): Fats Domino, La Vern Baker, and The Moonglows. Now if you haven't been studying your history of rock the last named, and maybe the second named, won't mean anything. But they were very big right then, and they were all black. The Moonglows had just made a hit single, "See-Saw", and the crowd went insane when they were introduced; unfortunately they were one of the comparatively new outfits and hadn't quite learned how to use a mike in a theatre with lousy acoustics. To cancel that out there were enough of them . . . four if I remember correctly . . . to make enough noise to satisfy the crowd. La Vern Baker was an old pro and she knew enough to get up tight on the mike, and when she got through even the newcomers in the audience who hadn't heard of her before (and I wasn't one of these, I hasten to say) were screaming for more and clapping with delight. Fats Domino everyone heard of. He was the grand finale of the concert and did about four numbers, including "Strollin'" and "Blueberry Hill". The crowd was adulative, and with good reason. He gave them a very good show and his backup people could have done what they were doing in their sleep, but didn't. Every time all the time.

Some of the more enthusiastic ticket holders tried to dance in the aisles. But this wasn't a campus concert, and the ushers broke that up pretty fast. Took the fun out of it. You could only sit there and listen. And clap.

Maybe that's where this inane clapping craze got started, in movie theatre r&r concerts where the ushers wouldn't let people dance to the marvelous music. You'd go insane sitting there, listening to great music, wiggling in your seat like a pree-vert. Finally you had to do something, and the only thing allowed was clapping. With a good loud r&r outfit like Baker or Fats Domino this did not damage the music, because these Pros knew how to project, even over several thousand people beating their hands together -- and the amps weren't nearly as good then. But the clapping played hell with the less polished groups. By the ends of their numbers often the only sound one could hear from the stage was the ubiquitous drummer.

Maybe people who learned to clap while they were tied to their seats at r&r concerts carried it on through the folk music craze, into that tv boosted abomination, the "hootenanny". To the point that true folk music lovers had to avoid folk concerts like the plague. Until folk performers started kicking back and educating audiences from the stage: "Do NOT clap along, dammit!"

Then I look at WOODSTOCK, where, acoustics problems or not, space problems or no, if you're the type who wanted to dance to the music then by damn at that concert you could -- and no usher ran up in his bellboy suit waving his flashlight at you to sit down.

I loved r&r concerts, but I must say, feetwise, the concert as an entform has certainly come a long way, and all for the better, in twenty some years.

# ON ACID

+ Scott Strauss +

" . . . Scott wanted to discover how he could change himself in order to terminate this unhealthy and painful relationship. So he decided to take a wopping dose of LSD in order to gain a better perspective. . . . and while his parents were out of town he really got stoned and when they returned there were no more arguments for the rest of the summer. . . .

" . . . What happened during the acid trip? The acid was dropped with the purpose of finding out what was wrong, and what to do about it. Under acid two images appeared in Scott's mind. There was a beach, and that old legend claiming if one grain of sand had been moved or changed a million years ago the entire beach would be completely different now. The second thing appearing to him was ice. Ice is a crystal which like many others, can sometimes form around a seed. The structure of this tiny seed is felt to effect the shape and even the type of resulting crystal (which is one of the central themes of Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle). . . .

" . . . Scott saw from these two ideas that the form and meaning of his being were results of basic seed crystals shaping a complex personality and set of characteristics. In addition if only one of these seed crystals or fundamental aspects of his character (on which all was based and subsequently formed) was changed, the entire person would be altered, everything about him. Changing one of these grains a certain way could form someone like a Friedman or Lampertz, or changing in another direction, a Houston, Nutrax, or Rust. Now the problem was could Scott go back in his mind with the aid of acid, cause a little turn that would lead to a reorganization with 'desirable' results. . . .

" . . . Acid does wondrous things, and Scott explored the lattice of his mind, darting in dark crevices here, and explored all types of cross ways and paths there. He was astounded by the complexity beyond all expectation and also by the possible instability if the wrong links were rearranged. It was easy for him to understand now the truth in what someone who was very perceptive had once told him. No sane person can or will ever really be able to change basically.

" . . . Scott was frightened now at pulling out the wrong stake, changing the wrong links of his personality. The mind could readjust in ways unplanned for, or collapse completely because resultant readjustment might be impossible. Since Scott was working alone his mind would have to do its own reorganizing, and it would be difficult for something that is newly disorganized to readjust itself without external help and stability. So Scott tried something new. . . ."

These excerpts are taken from the autobiographical ramblings of an adolescent boy in search of ways to better evaluate those inevitable difficulties during that sometimes difficult time of life. I was that boy and in June I hope to graduate from Medical School. Because of my medical education, previous drug

research and drug experiences, I am often asked about LSD. At present the most commonly asked question concerns the possibility of chromosomal aberrations as a result of ingesting LSD. Also frequently brought up are such topics as the possible "uses" of the chemical, the potential dangers, and do I recommend acid for others. I will briefly attempt to discuss these areas.

The possibility of chromosomal breakages is a much discussed topic. One of the best review articles, (The New Physician, July 1969) compiling the results of many researchers finds conflicting evidence, certainly no clear cut case of acid having deleterious effects on the chromosomes of drug users. The New England Journal of Medicine (April 23, 1970) reports experimentation with LSD revealing no significant differences in the chromosomal breakages before and after LSD was given to individuals, except, surprisingly enough, a possible decrease in some types of chromosomal breaks occurring in subjects after taking LSD. This carefully planned and executed research found no differences between a group of people who had never taken the drug and those who were given pure LSD. Tissue cultures in the test tube revealed increased chromosomal breaks after LSD was added in concentrations hundreds of times greater than those ever ingested. In their discussion the researchers conclude ". . .to date all indications that LSD ingestion is associated with significant increase in the frequency of chromosomal breakage are based on the study of subjects who have ingest LSD under nonclinical conditions. On the other hand, studies on patients treated with LSD under clinical conditions have not indicated similar increases." In otherwords careful experimentation with the ingestion of pure LSD has never yet shown increases in chromosomal breakages. I must add that I would intuitively advise against dropping acid, or any other drug, including excess coffee ingestion, during the early months of pregnancy.

LSD has been clinically used, with reportedly beneficial results by reputable researchers in many areas, including childhood schizophrenia, chronic alcoholism, cases of terminal illness, so called sexual abnormalities, chronic neur-osis and personality disorders. Research is difficult, however because repu-table scientists have great difficulty obtaining the drug, even for animal studies.

Of interest are the direct physical dangers of the drug. No lethal dose has been determined because there has never been a single substantiated case of death from an overdose of LSD in man or laboratory animals ( except, possibly, an elephant), even in the face of gigantic doses. In other words LSD is far less physically hazardous than aspirin or practically any drug in one's medicine cabinet.

The emotional and intellectual effects of this extremely potent psychotomometric drug are another matter. It's a difficult subject and I can only make a comparison that I hope is somewhat understandable. With weak knees football or skiing become increasingly hazardous. Poor eyesight or slow reflexes make driving a motorcycle or car dangerous. This analogy has certain inescapable flaws, but is accurate in that possible rewards and pleasures must be weighed against potential hazards, and that these hazards are dependent on an individual's own personality makeup. Because of this each person must answer the question himself, whether he or she should take acid.

Would I take it again if I had my life to live over, and will I continue in the future? I will evade this question by saying that my early drug experiences were extremely valuable to me. I feel that in some ways I have gained in hours hat my close friends have taken years to achieve. (continued on page 15.)

## WITH MALICE TOWARD ALL

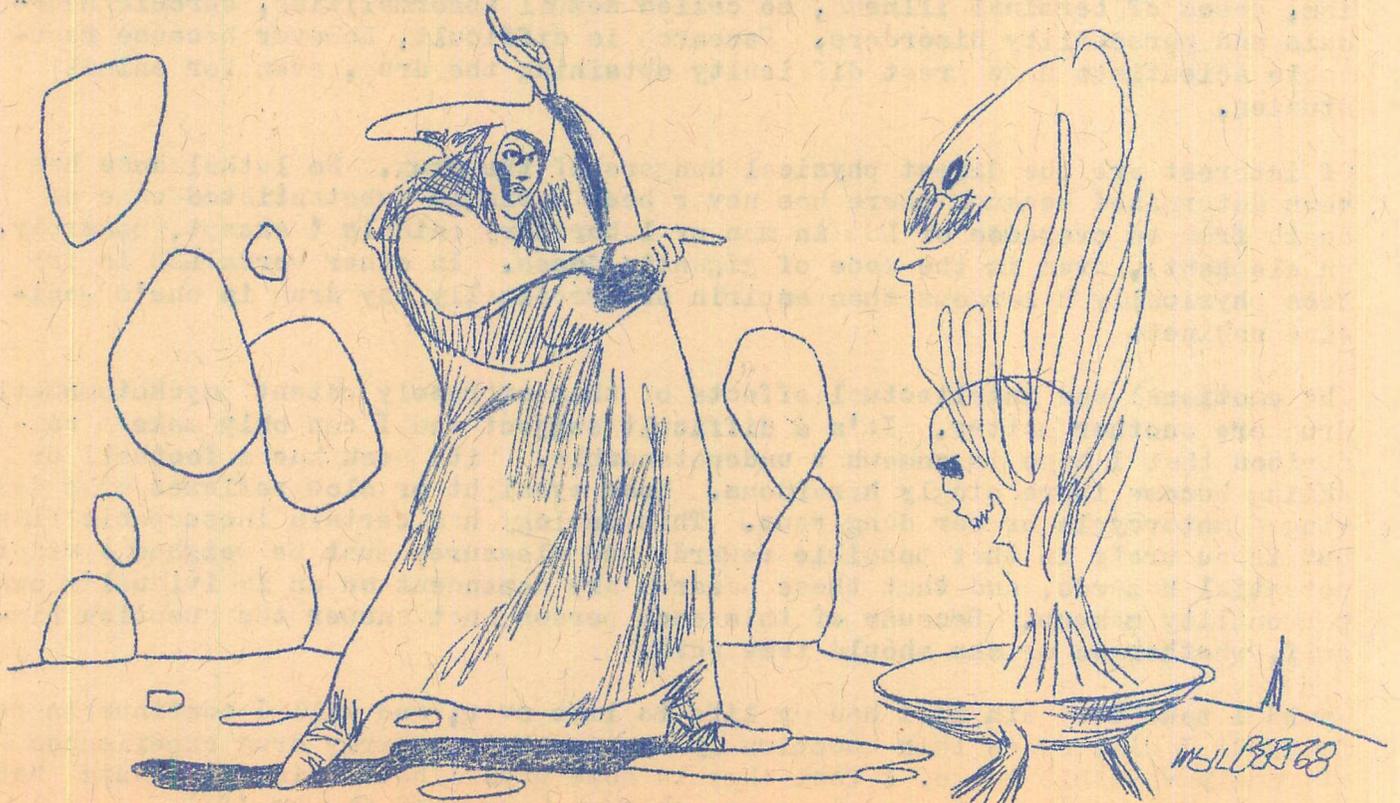
+ Joe Sanders +

THE TRAVELER IN BLACK, by John Brunner. Ace Special Fiction Special, 75¢.

AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS, AND OTHER TALES OF TERROR, by H. P. Lovecraft  
Beagle Books, 95¢.

Despite the backcover blurb -- "The time was the unguessable remote past -- or perhaps the distant future" -- Brunner's book can be called science fiction only by extreme courtesy. Actually, the four related stories are fantasy, dealing with the emergence of our world of rationality and natural law out of passionate, magical chaos. The setting is thus literally timeless, outside time, and the action is outside the kind of causes and effects characteristic of science fiction.

Of course, it's virtually impossible to write a story about chaos as such; a story is composed of people, objects, and events organized in a coherent pattern. Jack Vance's story "The Men Return" is an interesting stunt, showing Earth drifting through a cosmic zone of irrationality; however, the story is presented largely through the viewpoint of a normal survivor, and the chaos ends before Vance ends the story. Other stories in the vein of theme and mood Vance has been working lately picture an "Earth" so distant from ours in time that the very laws of nature have changed. Still, Vance's characters survey that world coolly, confident in their ability to discover and live by its rules, whatever they are. TRAVELER takes the same kind of setting and mood several steps farther. At the beginning of the book, man coexists with gods, demons and other supernatural forces. Gradually, however, the power of the "normal" human outlook, embodied in the Traveler, diminishes, imprisons, and destroys these unpredictable powers. Instead of simply living by the world's incompre-



hensible laws, Brunner's hero imposes laws on his world. The subject of each story is a threat to that process, caused by the greed of men who want to use magic to bypass natural laws, so they can exploit the power of chaos. The Traveler adroitly uses the natural defects of magic -- the blind, unrestrained will -- to let the would-be magicians destroy themselves. Hereupon the world becomes a little more orderly and predictable, until the Traveler's job is done and he can leave the world and the men in it to look after themselves. If not science fiction, then, TRAVELER shows the creation of a world in which science fiction can be conceived and written.

Looking at the stories in TRAVELER, whatever they're labeled, I prefer the first two, "Imprint of Chaos" and "Break the Door of Hell". For one thing, by halfway through the book one becomes aware of a rather large pile of mutilated corpses that's been accumulating. Not only does the Traveler help would-be magicians to find unpleasant ends, but in several vignettes at the beginning of each story he grants the desires expressed by people he meets along the road; these wishes usually end in death or major physical injury for the person who wishes incautiously. The point of these short takes fits the Traveler's purpose, I suppose, by emphasizing that people should be reasonable and not wish for too much, for things counter to reality. However, in some cases Brunner must really strain his interpretation of a wish to show each wisher coming to harm, and about halfway through such scenes cease to prove the Traveler's point and prove merely that Brunner enjoys playing rigged, bloody games.

It's not quite that simple, though. "Break the Door of Hell" is probably the most extremely sadistic story, what with people being castrated, entombed, or eaten alive by starving children. (I tried, briefly, to analyze this last scene, figuring how much each of the thirty children would have to eat in order to leave Dame Rosa as a pile of well-gnawed bones. But I gave it up; the story is not concerned so much with plausibility as the good clean fun of watching each magician get his appropriate, messy fate.) Still, I think the story works, and not just because of the exuberance with which Brunner invents horrible deaths. For one thing, in "Break the Door of Hell," Jacques of Ys serves as a foil for the Traveler's attitude, for a short time, and he learns from what happens. But I'm not saying that cruelty is permissible if it's used to teach a lesson. Quite beyond the redeeming-social-significance of Jacques' role is the pleasure of finding someone who is, however briefly, outside the pattern by which these stories are constructed. The other characters fill their assigned roles without creating any extra concern or showing any extra life, like good cardboard cutouts. Jacques has a slightly more interesting personality. Perhaps, then, it's the formula, of which sadism is a part, that begins to tire me halfway through TRAVELER. For despite the professionalism with which Brunner rolls out new settings, characters, and situations, a reader knows pretty much what to expect in another story in this series by the time he's finished two of them.

Or perhaps the problem is inherent in Brunner's subject. It seems to me, at least, that as the world grows tamer the stories in TRAVELER become less interesting. The early stories are flavored richly with references to strange gods, creatures and customs. One can enjoy the sound of utterly foreign names and the sight of alien landscapes, relax into the feel of a different world. However, as magic is defeated these embellishments must disappear, and the reader is left with the characters -- who are pretty flat and uninteresting -- or the interest of watching the Traveler operate -- which is a pretty predictable, gory business.

For all these reasons, then, I'm not very impressed by THE TRAVELER IN BLACK, and it's something of a pleasure to turn to AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS. But not an unmixed pleasure. If Brunner's writing is always evenly professional, even in inferior stories, Lovecraft mixes incompetence and brilliance unpredictably. Of the four stories in MOUNTAINS, only three are worth reading at all. "The Statement of Randolph Carter" is a thin, silly sketch, full enough of goshwow emotion and evasive description to serve as a parody of Lovecraft if only it were more interesting. But the story has no background, no characters, and no point -- just a puny "surprise" ending. Much more technically competent is "The Shunned House," showing the successful purging of evil from a house. Lovecraft sets up the mystery skillfully and solves it impressively. The story is well done and successful on its own terms. Still, those terms are more constricted than usual for Lovecraft, and I was more interested in "The Dreams in the Witch House" and "At the Mountains of Madness," because their originality and their ability to exasperate are more typical of Lovecraft's work.

To take the shorter story first, "Dreams" is simultaneously fascinating and infuriating. The story's action and its hints of fantastic cosmic vision are fascinating, while the characters are infuriating in their willful blindness, their refusal to see repeated hints that are obvious to readers. Walter Gilman's insistence that his nightly experiences are only dreams, despite ample physical evidence, is so wrong-headed that a reader may dismiss Gilman as the idiot hero of an idiot plot and throw the book down in disgust. Not quite, though. For one thing, the story is enthralling despite its human characters; for another, one can find some explanation for the characters' obtuseness.

Gilman and his friend Elwood are not stupid. They do try to figure out what is happening -- it's just that they try to analyze events by a completely inappropriate method, according to a thoroughly inadequate viewpoint. Gilman is a math student, fascinated by "Non-Euclidean calculus and quantum physics"; although he connects his scientific interests with legends of magical lore, he approaches magic as a mathematician. And although his unconscious mind releases itself to supernatural temptations, his consciousness holds on more and more desperately to a non-supernatural interpretation of the things that happen to him. To accept that he really is meeting Kezia and the others would move him outside rationality and thus outside the framework of ideas that defines his personality. And so he evades understanding. The supernatural threatens scientifically-oriented man's very sense of self. And this, quite apart from any physical menace, is what Lovecraft's characters really fear. "Sanity" is a fragile contrivance. Man protects it by avoiding knowledge that would question his place in the world. Even in "The Shunned House," in which men successfully attack a supernatural being, the narrator's uncle is overcome as he tries to purge the house of evil, and even as the narrator proceeds to destroy the creature he comments "Some secrets of inner earth are not good for mankind, and this seemed one to me." Thus he does not explain the matter to the people around him: it is better for their peace of mind if they can remain ignorant. (And if this seems incredible, remember what we've been willing to do to Vietnamese and ourselves to keep our political self-image intact.)

This goes along, of course, with Lovecraft's frequent exclamations about nameless horrors, blasphemous abominations, etc., and his comment in SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE that

The true weird tale has . . . A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces . . . ; and there must be a hint . . . of that most terrible conception of the human brain -- a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.

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Lovecraft offers an interesting contrast to Brunner, then, in subject as well as treatment. If *THE TRAVELLER IN BLACK* shows a world stabilizing itself, Lovecraft's world moves in the opposite direction. The world in *TRAVELLER* is becoming a fit habitation for science; in Lovecraft's work science usually succeeds only in revealing some appalling clue that man dare not feel at home in this world.

Sam Moskowitz has called Lovecraft a science fiction writer, and I'd have to disagree. But Sam's reading is not altogether unreasonable. It's true that Lovecraft was interested in science personally and recognized that he lived in a scientifically-oriented age, like it or not. But in his fiction Lovecraft repeatedly questions whether science can make sense of everything in our universe or whether our eager, self-confident explorations will bring us into something so far outside our rational framework "that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age" ("The Call of Cthulhu").

So, irritating as it sometimes is, the short-sightedness of Lovecraft's characters can be accepted as part of the situation he's examining, and it might not be disagreeable to him that a reader recognizes their limitations. Understanding the cause of those limitations, one can even accept Lovecraft's heroes as more than the fumbling dullards they appear to be at first. Even in "Dreams in the Witch House," I think, a reader winds up with sympathy for Gilman and even some satisfaction at his trying to act like a decent man in impossible circumstances. It does Gilman or anyone else little good -- man's position may be purely hopeless -- but at least he tries to understand and act.

"At the Mountains of Madness" is even more impressive and more maddening. It's quite a long story, and approximately the first third is infuriating and tedious. The information radioed to the narrator from another camp in unexplored Antarctica is fascinating, but a reader is frustrated at not being able to see directly the strange, supposedly-dead creatures the expedition has discovered, and one is increasingly infuriated at the characters' inability to put two and two together. This failure of vision probably comes from the scientific myopia I've discussed above, but it's spread much thicker here. When the narrator arrives at the camp to find everyone slaughtered or missing and the undissected "specimens" vanished, one feels like shouting at him, "They did it, dumbhead -- the monsters! And those aren't eroded mountaintops that look like buildings -- those are buildings, probably part of the monsters' home city, you dingaling! And they're probably headed for there now!"

The story finally gets moving after that elephantine introduction, and Lovecraft's description of the narrator and companion exploring the deserted city is detailed and suitably eerie. All this time, through rather cumbersome lectures, Lovecraft's narrator tries to stretch his reader's mind to conceive a vast extent of history (showing what a naive understanding of time went into the precise geological terminology used in the first part of the story) and to accept a pride-shattering picture of man's creation. To the Old Ones, men are

like rather curious mold growing on their garbage.

The remarkable fact, all things considered, is what the two men continue to explore even after they finally have realized what else must be prowling through the dead city. But an even greater surprise, given Lovecraft's general attitude, is still to come. Following the trail of the revived Old Ones, the narrator and companion find several killed and mutilated. And the narrator reacts not with suddering, unreasoning horror but with pity for the dead creatures:

After all, they were not evil things of their kind. They were the men of another age and another order of being. Nature had played a hellish jest on them -- as it will on any others that human madness, callousness, or cruelty may hereafter dig up in that hideously dead or sleeping polar waste -- and this was their tragic homecoming. They had not been even savages -- for what indeed had they done? That awful awakening in the cold of an unknown epoch -- perhaps an attack by the furry, frantically barking quadrupeds, and a dazed defense against them and the equally frantic white simians with the queer wrappings and paraphernalia . . . Scientists to the last -- what had they done that we would not have done in their place? God, what intelligence and persistence! . . . Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star spawn -- whatever they had been, they were men!

That last sentence in particular is an incredible achievement for Lovecraft, as a great tribute to the rational mind's ability to grow in knowledge and feeling as I can imagine.

Of course the story does not end on that note. The Old Ones and men are alike at the mercy of nature, subject to physical and psychic destruction. At the end of the story, the narrator's companion has suffered a nervous breakdown after seeing the Shoggoth that overcame the Old Ones, and the narrator begs other scientists not to explore the area any further. The story also ends with another rush of vague exclamations, supported by a description that's not terrifying unless a reader shares Lovecraft's horror of subways. Still, with all its flaws, "At the Mountains of Madness" is a most impressive work. Again, Lovecraft succeeds in moving his reader past irritation with the story's human characters to a cold, dark pinnacle from which one can glimpse a sweep of time and a range of space beyond human comprehension.

In this collection, as elsewhere, Lovecraft's work is very uneven but sometimes brilliant. It can interest and surprise a reader. On the other hand, THE TRAVELER IN BLACK shows no real ineptness but no real freshness either. It's mildly inappropriate to label Brunner's book science fiction, but I think it's much more inappropriate to call it anything special

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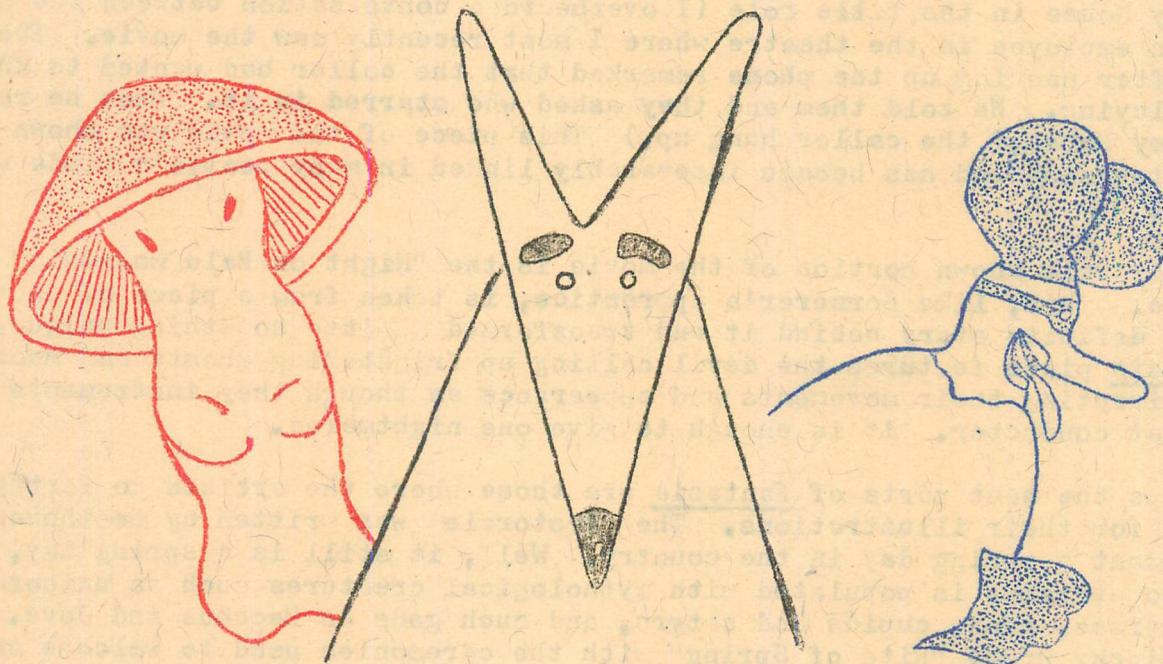
continued from page 10: ON ACID --

May I end with Huxley's conclusion in The Doors of Perception after his first experience with mescaline. "The Man who comes back through the door in the wall will never be quite the same as the man who went out. He will be wiser, but less cocksure, happier but less self-satisfied, humbler in acknowledging his ignorance, yet better equipped to understand the relationship of words to things, of systematic reasoning to the unfathomable mysteries which it tries, forever vainly, to comprehend."

# Animasia

or: We All Live in a Full Length Colar Cartoon

+ Lesleigh Luttrell +



Until very recently, almost the only people who did animated features or full-length cartoons were the Disney studio people. They did many versions of the fairy tales which contained all the classical elements, in addition to the special Disney touches, such as Jimminy Cricket in Pinocchio and the talking mice in Cinderella. These movies were well done, popular and the subject of many fevivals. But they only hinted at what could be done with the medium. Disney studios made only one really artistically ambitious film and it wasn't very popular or profitable. That film, only now gaining a modicum of respect and financial success was Fantasia.

Fantasia was something entirely different. It combined classical music (performed by a live action orchestra) and animation. Its stated purpose is to illustrate the music in ways that a (slightly weird) listener might imagine for himself. In fact, looking at it now, it seems very much like an acid trip. The narrator explains how people listening to music might start to imagine things that seem to go with it. At first these are simply different ways of looking at the musicians. But then you start imagining really weird things like colors and motions which seem to 'go' with the music. This sort of thing is very much appreciated by the acid heads in a modern audience. I think it points out that a 'natural high' can be as weird and as good as acid. (I wouldn't be surprised if the Disney people were doing grass then, but certainly not LSD). From this point, Fantasia goes into the illustration of great pieces of music with very odd, but appropriate strips of animation.

The scenes from Nutcracker Ballet are actually very tame, the sort of thing many people might imagine as they listen to this music (though not the things Tchaikowsky intended the music to represent). These bits of animation are more cute than serious, but still very remarkable. Fairly straight are the Chinese dance, performed by Chinese looking mushrooms, and the Russian Dance performed by dandelions. Other parts of the ballet are performed by dew fairies, frost fairies and fish.

Perhaps the most famous part of Fantasia is "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" with Mickey Mouse in the title role (I overheard a conversation between the manager and an employee in the theatre where I most recently saw the movie. The manager after hanging up the phone remarked that the caller had wanted to know what was playing. He told them and they asked who starred in it. When he replied 'Mickey Mouse,' the caller hung up.) This piece of the movie was shown often on television and has become inseparably linked in many people's minds with the music.

Another well known portion of the movie is the "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence. This, like Sorcerer's apprentice, is taken from a piece of music which has a definite story behind it and transformed into something unique. The Fantasia piece features the devil calling up frightening ghosts and monsters and directing their movements and appearance as though they instruments and he a great conductor. It is enough to give one nightmares.

Perhaps the best parts of Fantasia are those where the artists go farthest afield for their illustrations. The "Pastorale" was written by Beethoven to represent a spring day in the country. Well, it still is a spring day, but the countryside is populated with mythological creatures such as unicorns, flying horses, pans, cupids and satyrs, and such gods as Bacchus and Jove. Stravinsky wrote "Rite of Spring" with the ceremonies used to welcome and insure the arrival of spring in ancient times in mind. The Disney crew saw it as music to create the universe by. They move from whirling clouds of gas, to the formation of the solar system and earth, the cooling of our globe, the appearance of life, the first land animals, ending with the dinosaurs. In this impressive piece the dinosaurs are very beautiful and real and it is painful to watch them die in the throes of extinction at the end of the piece. This segment of the film might be taken philosophically. Considering the age of the Earth, everything that occurred up until the extinction of the dinosaurs might be considered merely its spring -- and we are living in the Earth's summer, or perhaps fall. Too, the extinction of the dinosaurs may be likened to the sacrifice of an animal or even person, found in many fertility rites. The dinosaurs died that we might live!

Fantasia is a remarkable film and one can't help but wonder how the history of the Disney studios and animated features might have differed had it made money in its first incarnation. But it did not, and it took 20 years for anything like it to be again attempted. That recent film is Yellow Submarine, which with the Beatle name attached was a guaranteed money maker.

Yellow Submarine is based very loosely on the Beatle song of the same title. The script, written by the infamous Eric Segal among others, describes a land full of beauty and music beneath the sea, Pepperland, which is attacked by the evil Blue Meanies and their minions. One citizen escapes via the yellow submarine and flees to Liverpool, where he enlists the aid of the Beatles. They meet many adventures on the return journey, and once arrived in Pepper-

land (named after Sgt. Pepper) they proceed to rally the citizens and convert the meanies with music and love. But the plot is not really the important part of the movie. 18

The animation itself is the most important and revolutionary part of Yellow Submarine. It draws on op and pop art, the work of other graphic artists, impressionism and cubism, photographs and snippets of live action film, and combines them all into a unique whole which is so impressive that it seems to be used everywhere now, especially in advertising.

Yellow Submarine combines this animation with delightful music by both the Beatles and George Martin. Some of the sequences, notably the meany attack, the sea of monsters, and the nowhere man are beautiful and really trippy. And the movie itself is delightful, and very likely to produce an audience which leaves the theatre singing, as they are directed to do in the live action sequence with the Beatles which ends the movie.

A third example of this particular art form is a movie very recently premiered on television, The Point. This particular movie centers around the music of Harry Nilsson. It concerns a boy named Oblio who is born in a land where everything and everyone has a point on the top but him. Besides suffering a little embarrassment, he is allowed to live in peace until he defeats the son of 'the evil count' at a game called Triangle Toss. The infuriated count causes Oblio and his dog to be banished to the pointless forest. Oblio has many adventures there while discovering that everything there too has a point. He returns to the Land of Point to reveal this: "Since everything has a point, I must have one too." And he does. The story is done as if it is a bedtime story being read by a father who does not realize his son is viewing the story at the same time on television. The voice of the father-narrator is done by Dustin Hoffman in his best Al Capp style. The story itself, like many of the fairy tales, seems to have a point.

The animation is rather simple and stark compared to that of the other movies, but still very well done (it probably looks more impressive on a color T.V.) One of the notable things about the movie is the way it uses movie technique such as the close-up, long shot and movie-type editing (such as switching from one character to another in a conversation scene) rather than the more static cartoon-type editing.

There are some extraordinary sequences, my favorite being to Rockman who explains to Oblio that "Us stone people are everywhere." The Nilsson songs, like the Beetle tunes in Yellow Submarine, don't really seem to have much to do with the plot at second glance. However, they seem to fit right in with the action while you are watching. The only one which is really illustrated for itself is "Think about your Troubles," a song which follows a teardrop dropped into a teacup, as it goes down to the ocean where it is eaten by a whale who eventually dies and decomposes, the teardrop returning to the water and finally finding its way into another cup of tea. A truly nice film.

These three movies; Fantasia, Yellow Submarine and The Point, constitute a new artform. They are more than full length cartoons or animated movies. They are characterized by inventive animation, unique combinations of music and art, cartoon and movie techniques. They have a special appeal to anyone, not just children, who can extend their imagination, artificially or otherwise, far enough to encompass them. I, for one, am looking forward to further exploration in this field.



## "words from readers"

Ken Fletcher '71

Mike Glicksohn, 267 St. George St., Apt. 807, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Grant's cover is excellent if somewhat chilling in concept. He's one of the really first class artists to appear recently in fandom and I can see that the Best Fan Artist Hugo is going to become very difficult to vote for. I imagine that it will turn out to go on a "Well, X won last year and is still as good as Y but this year it's Y's turn and Z'll have to wait until next year."

Angus Taylor brought over the Firesign Theatre's third album and played it for us and it certainly is one of the heaviest albums I've ever heard. I'll have to hear it at least three or four times more before I'll be willing to say what I think it all means. Anyone who digs sf, puns and nostalgia will find this album a must.

Angus's article is, for me, the best thing in the issue. His ability to connect the various aspects of popular culture is amazing (but then he did help write a college textbook on that subject so he ought to be well-informed). As an inveterate punster, I stand in awe of his titles -- they are superb; I'm waiting for him to connect the Airplane with a riot at a baseball game under the title Blows Against the Umpire.

Will Straw, 303 Niagara Blvd., Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada

I've yet to see any working of background into an sf story which hasn't appeared contrived; the alternate, that of leaving most detail out, is probably more harmful to the understanding of the story, but seeing characters sit down and talk about the history of their particular planet or chronological era is unnatural to the point of it being Bad Writing. I'd agree with Harry Warner that this is a particular problem of newer stories as opposed to those of the thirties or early forties, and I'd cite this as one of the best examples of the de-personalizing of today's science fiction. No matter how unhuman a character John Carter, say, was presented as, it was quite easy to identify with him, and to have the geography and history of a New World revealed to the reader at the same rate as it was made known to the hero. It's much more difficult to imagine oneself thinking along the same lines of a character supposedly brought up in a different society than our own; conversely, it seems unnatural to

have that character think thoughts similar to ours, and to have him feel the same curiosity towards the background of the story as us is very contrived.

If Lesleigh was trying to convert others over to the Carl Barks Cult, I doubt that she succeeded; her article seemed nothing more than a run-down on the characters and personalities Barks created, rather than what he did with them. Donald Duck and the whole gang were really nothing more than the stereotyped funny animal things that were turned out by the hundreds in the forties and fifties, but the plots, the element that sets Barks above all the others in his field, were almost completely ignored in her article.

Don Fitch, 3908 Frijo, Covina, Calif. 91722

I can't decide whether to consider Jim Turner's action (dropping out of school 5 units short of a degree and becoming a dishwasher) as a valid alternative, or as a cop-out. (About 18 years ago I took a good, hard look at the Graduate School Application Form, and decided that, by God, I did not want to become a Librarian and spend the rest of my life reading reviews of books and in trying to worm larger appropriations out of the City Fathers. I got a "temporary" job at a nearby greenhouse, and am now nurseryman/propagator at a large Arboreum & Botanic Garden -- doing almost exactly what I'd be doing if I had an independent income of a million dollars a year.) But I don't think Jim Turner likes his present job at all. He sure as hell doesn't like teaching, and certainly should not go into it, but I think he's missing something by turning himself off for 8 hours of the day.

I've not read more than 5 or 10 Donald Duck comics in the past 20 years, but they suddenly came flooding back as I read your article. Everything you say seems to be True and Right, and is marvelously evocative. Thanks.

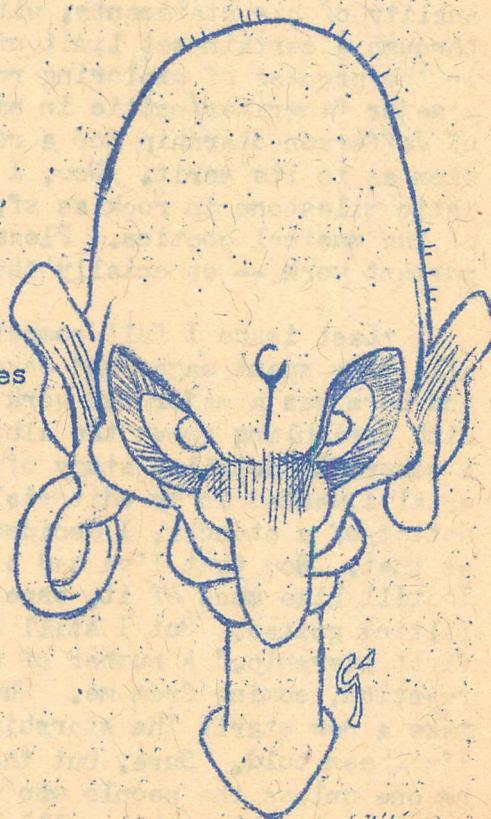
Jerry Kaufman, 1485 $\frac{1}{2}$  Pennsylvania Ave., Columbus, Ohio  
43201

Does Carl Barks still draw Donald Duck? It's a shame the man can't sign his name to his work. The Disney studios have always been like that. Walt Kelly once worked for Disney, and quit, I believe, because of the animation factory atmosphere.

+Barks has retired as an artist. Many of his stories are still being reprinted. (I'm sure anyone can tell them from the new ones.) Also, he writes scripts sometimes, mostly for the Junior Woodchucks, I think. I think the ecological stories are his. -- LML +

Hank Davis, Box 154, Loyall, KY 40854

I'm delighted to see Lesleigh's article on Donald Duck. The earliest sf I was exposed to was in comic books my parents read to me before I had to learn what those funny looking little marks in the balloons meant myself. And some of the best ones were in Donald Duck's mag. Mickey Mouse had some stfnal flings himself -- I remember one encounter he and Goofy had with giant intelligent ants -- but Donald and his nephews had the really





groovy adventures, and had a better artist. By the way, was Carl Barks the writer or the artist; or both?

+Both --LML

About the only other comic book with anything like Donald Duck's baroque ornamentation came a few years later when EC started MAD and Wallace Wood started drawing panels swarming with zany background detail.

Rich Benyo, 207 Center Street, Jim Thorpe, Pa. 18229

Jim Turner's piece on the lunacy of education was quite well put in a minimum of space and no lame excuses. It seems that a Higher Education ranks with Final Victory and a Peaceful Deathbed in the Great American Dream, even if the individual in question is not interested in a college education, entering another war or old enough to die of old age.

The two surprising aspects of it are; 1) The number of young people there are who share Jim's feelings yet who keep plugging through college to keep their parents happy & 2) the number of kids who are going through college behind rose-colored glasses, thinking that it is going to be the same often sterile environment outside as it was inside.

Dave Hulvey, Rt. 1, Box 189, Harrisonburg, Va. 22801

Angus Taylor has built a column on rock comment that puts much professional verbiage to the low status of mere mind-shadow-boxing. He uses quotes to improve the quality of his statements, without seeming to rely on them as crutches to hobble through a certain set limit of assigned wordage. I don't know how long he has been in the process of exploring rock and sf with just such eloquence, but he looks like a major fanwriter/critic in embryo. Whatever, I wish he'd take the major statement of Jefferson Starship for a column topic, expound upon it and arrive at a conclusion as to its merit. Now, I have a problem with the album. For me, it's an artistic milestone in rock as sf, yet the politico nihilism ruins some of the effect of the musical poetics. Please have Angus Taylor delve the essence of this important work -- especially the relative merits of its politico relish.

+Last issue I felt compelled to write about Blows Against the Empire -- after all, I've spent pages and pages in Starling writing about science fiction and rock, and here was a major new work in the field. I filled several pages in my notebook with scribbling about the album, and then found that I was unable to put together a coherent, detailed study of the record. Finally, when I had typed the other material I wanted in my editorial, and found I only had a small space left on the bottom of a stencil, I decided to just write a short, vague comment and let it go at that. Now that I've had a little more time to think about the album. . .well. . . I still like much of it, especially parts of the second side with Jerry Garcia's lilting guitar. But I still dislike the "theme" of the album: "Let's rip off the first starship." A number of people have thought that this was a curiously conservative reaction, coming from me. Why not let a bunch of good people take the starship and make a new start? The starship belongs to the people who can make the best use of it, I've been told. Sure, but the point is that there is no Starship, and there won't be one unless the people who want to see one get off their butts and try to build a future in which there will be one. The Paul Kanters of the world should be working toward a future when "we" won't have to steal the starship from "them" because there won't be a "we" and "them." So I think, like I said last issue, that the vision of Blows Against the Empire is "small and stunted." -- HL

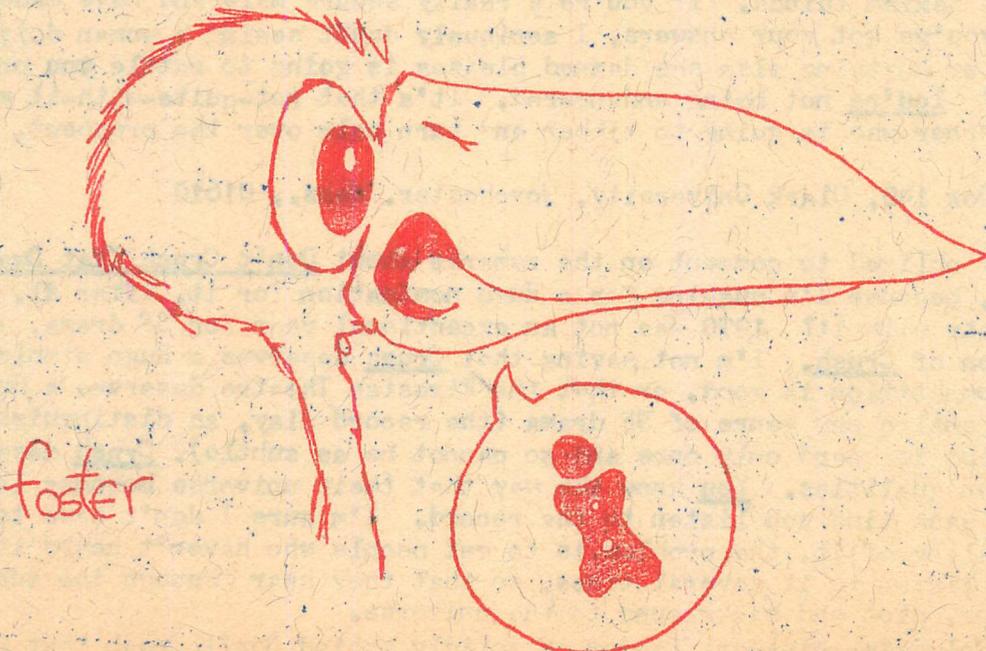
Buck Coulson, Route 3, Hartford City, In 47348

In regard to Angus Taylor's column in Starling 17, has anyone pointed out that this craze for "newness" in the arts (how many times did Angus mention "new blood"?) is precisely the same impulse that creates annual model changes in automobiles and floods the market with "new" and generally useless kitchen gadgets? I think we need to learn more about this human desire for anything new, so that it can either be controlled or channelled completely into the arts, where it is less likely to damage the ecology.

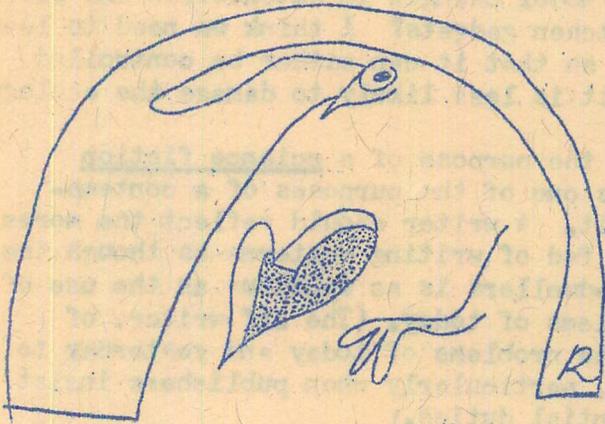
Tackett raises a point. But, after all, is it the purpose of a science fiction author to reflect his society? Obviously, it's one of the purposes of a contemporary novelist. But of other types? I doubt it. A writer should reflect the mores of the society he's writing about; the current fad of writing westerns as though the people portrayed were identical to modern city-dwellers is as spurious as the use of a future society to reflect the transient problems of today. (The stf writer, of course, has a harder job because he has only the problems of today and yesterday to guide him, and it's no wonder he drags them in, particularly when publishers insist on it. But I don't think it's one of his essential duties.)

Juanita Coulson, Route 3, Hartford City, IN 47348

Agree with Larry Propp that forbidding women to housewife, if they want, is wrong. I don't get that impression from Millett, though. She overreacts, maybe, the same way the Panthers overreact. Just as it's been a fact for some thousands of years if a woman wanted to succeed in a profession she had to be better than a man, if a militant female wants to get a hearing, she has to be twice as loud, and sometimes as irritating, as a militant male. I think it's partly the shock and newness of it that's setting some male teeth on edge. Point is, there should be a choice. . .an honest and open and no strings choice for females as well as males; and in our society, or in most others, no such choice existed. Still doesn't. As Millett points out right now if all the males were wiped out, the technology would collapse. Not because women couldn't handle the technology, but because they haven't been permitted and encouraged to learn the skills that would enable them to. They have no choice in the matter. Given a choice women can become as good at technological skills as men.



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But they're certainly made to feel like freaks if they opt for a plumbing or tv re-  
pairing course.



Probably. . .not definitely, because I repeat we don't really know. . .if all females were given a total, free choice of what to do with their lives, from infancy on, a majority would probably opt for the motherhood bit. I can't imagine that too many of them, given no pressure and cultural psyching in that direction, would opt for housekeeping as a career, though. You guys ought to try it for a while as a so-called profession. Women are the stronger sex -- if only because they've put up with housework, the most boring, unadulterated mind-rotting crap ever invented by society. Women may love kids and kid tending, but I've never heard anybody go into

ecstasies over dish washing, mopping the floor, bed making or all the other ugh stuff that goes with existing in this society. . .and with damned good reason.

+I refer you to Jim Turner's article, this issue, written in response to the reaction to his article in the last issue of Starling about why he dumped education in favor of dish washing. --HL

There are a lot of females who over react. It's a result of being stepped on so long. I think a lot of us, when we run into a Yes, But, or a dumb-barefoot-and-pregnant philosophy, male immediately think, "What the hell's he so afraid of?" Because that's the way it comes across. Same as the white stomping the black routine. Inferiority was a gimmick to cover up the bit that the whites were scared silly of of so many things about the blacks. . .some of them needlessly. . .like this everlasting sex-mad hangup white males in the south have about blacks of either sex. . . and some of them with damned good reason. . .like the fear of finding out maybe some blacks were not only just as smart as they were but given a chance sharp enough to hand them change and take their jobs away from them. Women may figure the same applies in the sexism things. If you're a really secure male and have made your own way and know you've got your answers, I seriously doubt seeing a woman doing a technological job or anything else she damned pleases is going to rattle you one bit. Why should it? You're not being endangered. It's that not-quite-with-it male freak over in the corner who is going to gibber and turn pale over the prospect, isn't it?

Jacob Bloom, Box 140, Clark University, Worcester, Mass., 01610

I feel kind of obliged to comment on the remarks about Don't Crush That Dwarf, Hand Me the Pliers, because I'm pushing for a Hugo nomination for it. After all, what is there to compete with it? 1970 was not an exceptional year for SF drama, with the major exception of Crush. I'm not saying that Crush deserves a Hugo simply because none of the competition is good, or that the Firesign Theatre deserves a Hugo for opening up an entire new genre of SF drama (the record play, as distinguished from the radio play which is heard only once and so cannot be as subtle). Crush deserves a Hugo on its own qualities. You know the way that their universe becomes larger and more detailed each time you listen to the record. I'm sure I don't have to convince you of the quality of it, the problem is to get people who haven't heard it to listen to it, and to listen to it several times, so that they hear through the successive layers of humor, plot and background to the universe.

+All of Columbia, Missouri fandom is solidly behind Don't Crush that Dwarf. --HL

Harry Warner, 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740

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Roy Tacket thinks that we shouldn't condemn Burroughs, Chambers and Keller as racists because they were that way as mirrors reflecting the society about which they wrote. But this brings us right back to the old Heinlein enigma again: how far is it to impute to a writer the viewpoints that his fiction seems to demonstrate? In Heinlein's case, we apparently don't know how much he agrees with the attitudes of his characters because he won't respond to much questioning by fans, although I don't know that anyone has written him asking him specifically about these matters. In the case of Burroughs, Chambers and Keller, I'm not willing to consider them racists as a portion of their function as novelists, because they may have put the stereotyped kind of black men from the lynching days into their books for the same reasons as they put lots of violent action into their stories: because this was what their editors and readers demanded. I'm not aware that any of those three writers resorted to violence to solve their own problems, as their villains and heroes regularly did. But if you consider them racists from the way black men were handled in their stories, you must consider them violent in nature from the way their white men reacted to crises.

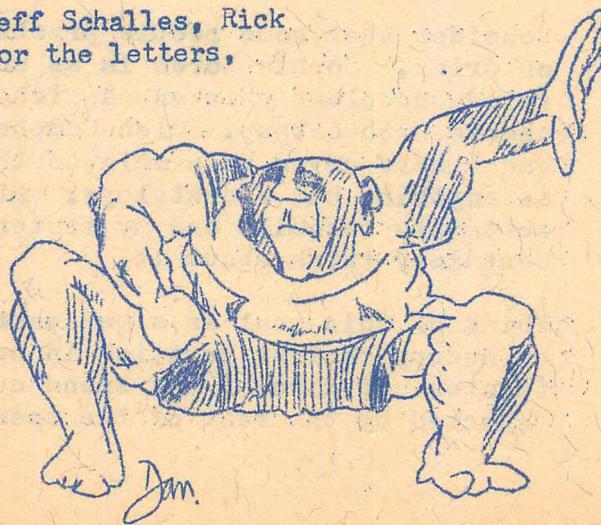
Terry Hughes, RFD #3, Windsor, Missouri 65360

What, only one cartoon by Tom Foster? The one by him was very nice, of course, a rock'n'roll band populated by Foster's creatures. A few people have accused him of being an imitator of Bode's, but I really don't see how anyone can look at his current work and say that. There is an obvious Bode's influence on his body structure, but it is only an influence, Foster's drawings are original efforts, not imitations. Bode's and Foster differ in backgrounds, props, most characters, facial expressions, and over-all mood. Where Bode's has lots of violence and sly, crafty characters, Foster has peaceful and happy settings populated by delightful characters who exude a child-like innocence.

Lesleigh's article on Donald Duck & Co. was a great analysis of the characters Gyro Gearloose and Uncle Scrooge were my favorite funny characters, I still have my first Uncle Scrooge comic. Now how about tackling Little Lulu? You two have gotten me hooked on her, you could at least do the same for the rest of your readers.

+I'd like to write something about Little Lulu, I've thought about it, but so far I haven't decided how to go about it. But be advised, Starling readers: John Stanley's Little Lulu was a fabulous comic. (Still is, they are reprinting older stories.) -- H L

WAHF: Bob Silverberg, Jeff Schalles, Rick Stoker. Thanks a lot for the letters, gang.



# LIFE IS A DISH ROOM

+ Jim Turner +



When people ask me why I'm a dishwasher, by God, I tell them.

Rational man generally blanches at the prospect. He sees only the drawbacks, the sundry versatile and niggling unpleasanties, the hundreds of cleverly de-meaning and uncomfortable postures of physical existence, the myriad hideousities of so-called humanity that lurk in kitchen corners ready to pounce upon his good sense with endless replays of the Big Game, past operations and beckoning prospects for more, and petitions for mitigation of the fate of fearless Lt. Calley, all leading of course to that conversational blockbuster -- "Hot enough for you today?"

Fie upon them.

I would be less than factual if I denied the existence of these things. I myself have suffered untold agonies in the performance of my duties.

But it is necessary to look beyond these things. One must cast aside his preconceptions and find a positive view.

I find dishwashing to be a profound emotional and intellectual experience and commend it to everyone.

The point of view of public service is so obvious to all that I shall quickly pass it over and procede to the metaphysical.

Picture our lives as meals. We emerge piping hot or freezing cold from the vast kitchen of eternity with as much eye and taste appeal as the materials at hand and the quality of preparation will bear. We are set down on the table of life by the Great Waiter where we function, each in our own ways.

Consider that some people practically cry out to be food or drink. Sophia Loren is as unquestionably freshly fried succulent chicken as Richard Nixon is cottage cheese with catsup. Glen Campbell is a frozen tv dinner and I have never been able to think of Hank Luttrell as anything but a cantalope. Blackjack, my cat, is certainly tecquila and my sister is Ripple. You should certainly think about it.

Think of this meal as a metaphor for the human condition. We occupy central position in our own little universe (plates and dishes) and spend out time being devoured or rejected by the rest of the cosmos.

If we are ingested, with or without relish, we are digested and our best portions fed upon by others and the rest turns to waste and is eliminated. If we are unpleasing and are rejected, we are scrapped from the plate and dumped into garbage where, in the end, we are no more important than that which was cherished and enjoyed. Such, such are the glories and a striving after wind, to wind up as excrement or as part of somebody else's protoplasm.

But don't let it bring you down. Think of the pleasure you will be affording the dishwasher.

Think of him back there in that hot dishroom, emerging from the primal mists of steam and the bracing stench of our fellows who have gone before and taking up the plate to which a few pitiful remnants cling. They will not cling there long. He will rinse them with a jet of hot water and put the plate into a rack and slide it into a beckoning, waiting dish machine as it heaves and groans with anticipation at the prospect of destroying the last shreds of our frail existence, yearning for the feeling of completion enjoyed by a well-filled grave. And the dishwasher has the satisfaction of knowing that it was his power and authority that made possible the (temporary) satisfaction of the machine.

I gain an enormous feeling of power from my job. I frequently part the canvas curtains in front of my machine and dig on the sight of the scalding jets of water, boiling with lethal suds, exuding mighty streams of rinse detergent, seeing with action. It really perks you up to slaughter millions of bacteria every pay period. Just think of their silent screams. (My suggestion that we end the present unpleasantness in Vietnam by miniturizing the enemy and running them through a dishwashing machine has been unaccountably ignored by Washington. I suspect that my membership in the opposition party may have something to do with it.)

I see possibilities for a religion here. Perhaps I will write to the Hobart Company which produces so many fine dish machines and suggest their Personal Department start looking around for a Messiah or at least a Prophet. The time is certainly ripe. What with the environmental brouhaha, a bright young man who could lead us away from phosphates might well go someplace. It would fill a vacuum in that I cannot offhand recall a faith that centers around food and clean eating utensils. And when one dies after a good life, he goes to Tupperware.

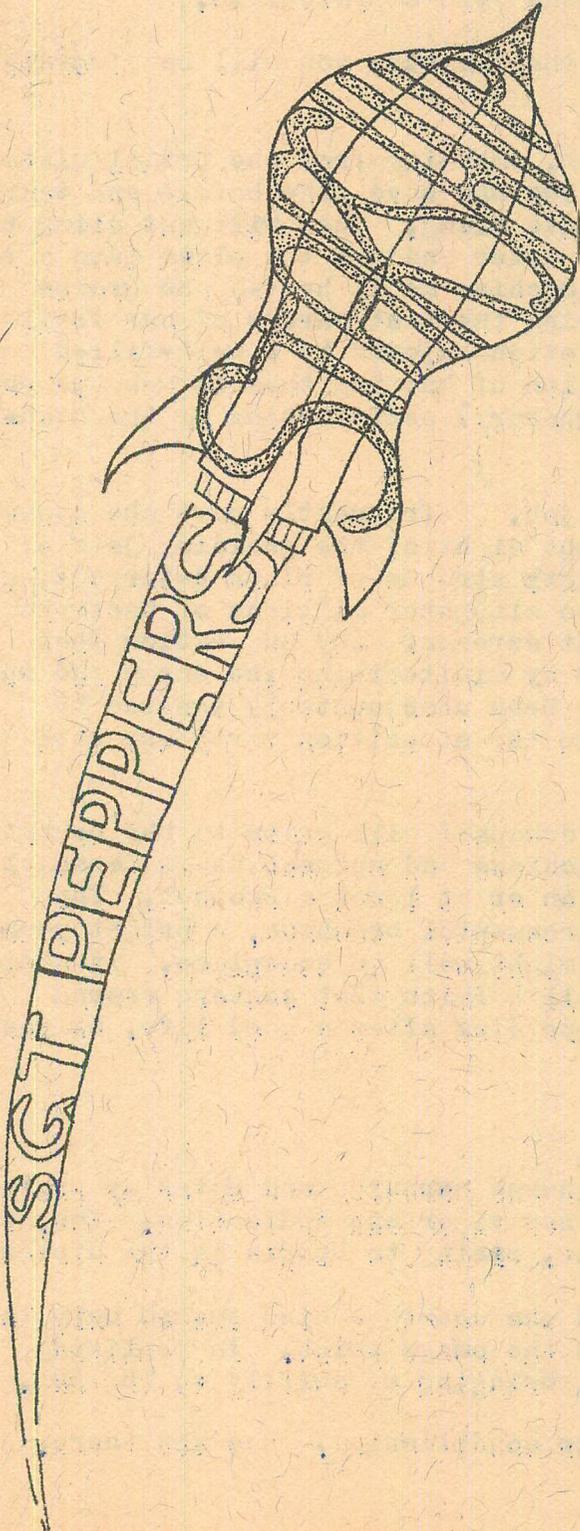
But I digress.

Men and women of America, turn from your mundane pursuits and enter my profession. Raise its standards and bring to it new vigor and dedication. You, too, can be in the vanguard of a new social order, rising to Utopia in the distance.

For if we are to believe Robbe-Grillet (and who doubts a mind second only to that of Beckett) the realization of self is the omega point. In realizing I am a dishwasher, I attain my omega point, bringing me swiftly to THE END.

P.S. After the Revolution we shall have air conditioning. See you there.

+ Angus Taylor +



Although the nineteen-fifties are not regarded as a decade of great social protest in the United States, there were various signs of unarticulated dissatisfaction among the young. Much attention nationally was paid to the spectre of Juvenile Delinquency. The restlessness of American youth found one outlet in rock 'n' roll, a mixture of black rhythm-and-blues and white country-and-western music. Ray Charles helped bring together the joyous sounds of gospel and the melancholy of the blues -- the sacred and the profane of Negro music -- in rhythm and blues, a musical form that had great appeal in the black ghettos of the North. Elvis Presley turned white youth on to the new sounds, thus helping to destroy the segregation in musical taste which had existed between the races. In general, popular music during the post-war era showed a turning away from the prettiness and sentimentality which marked the so-called "good" popular music of the middle class. However, the sounds and the lyrics of the new music were almost uniformly simple and clichéd and displayed little self-awareness or pretension to the status of "art". This began to change in the sixties.

Rock as it is today grew out of revitalized forms of rock 'n' roll and folk music. The folk music revival of the early sixties was inextricably tied to the American civil rights movement. Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, Peter Paul & Mary, and others appeared regularly at civil rights rallies, none of which was complete without its quota of inspirational songs. As more and more singers became composers in their own rights, rather than simply interpreting traditional ballads, civil rights themes brought a new immediacy to the lyrics of folk songs. In particular, Bob Dylan brought a new freedom to lyrics. It is Dylan more than anyone else who is credited with making the influence of poetry felt in modern song.

It was the Beatles who led the rock 'n' roll resurgence. The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and other British groups had been enormously influenced by American rock 'n' roll of the fifties, in partic-

ular Negro rhythm and blues. The dynamic energy of this music appealed greatly to a post-war generation of British youth, who perhaps felt frustrated by the rigid social stratification and relative economic stagnation of their society.

The fusion of folk music and rock 'n' roll released a great quantity of creative energy. Within a few years the rock music field expanded to totally dominate popular music, assimilating and transmuting elements of all other fields of popular and "serious" music, from country-and-western and jazz to baroque and Indian classical, and even to opera. This eclecticism is one of the outstanding features of rock. The field acts as a synthesizing medium through which the emotions and experience of a generation are shared among its members.

Rock is a genuinely popular art in the sense that it is music by and for the people. Its artists combine the minstrel tradition of Medieval and Renaissance Europe with the electronic technology of the twentieth century. In contrast to the "cool" jazz of the fifties and the abstract experiments in electronic music of Stockhausen and others, it has reasserted the importance of the performer and his relationship with the audience.

The Kinks were among the initial wave of British rock bands to have hit songs in North America during the "British invasion" of the Hit Parade charts in 1964 and 1965. Their first hit was "You Really Got Me"; with its insidious beat and bland lyrics, it gave little hint of the group's later inventiveness.

\* \* \* \* \*

RAY DAVIES AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF POSTALGIA

I

Every day I look at the world from my window. . .

A preoccupation with the way of society is indicated here -- the society which Raymond Douglas Davies can observe from his window. And a slight detachment. Detachment enough to encourage the development of a sharp eye, but not enough to eliminate concern.

Ray Davies is head of The Kinks, a group which many people assumed dropped out of sight years ago, only to surface recently with the release of a charmingly outrageous hit song, "Lola". In the interval, however, The Kinks -- principally through the genius of Ray Davies -- have built themselves a comfortable little niche in the world of rock, and have acquired a relatively small, but decidedly devoted, following. Paul Williams suggested in Rolling Stone last year that there existed a spiritual bond of sorts among the "select few" who were on to what The Kinks were doing. "I-mean it's not just some rock group," he wrote. "It's more like a taste for fine wines from a certain valley, a devotion to a particular breed of cocker spaniel."

Like The Beach Boys in the United States, The Kinks have remained outside the mainstream of rock evolution determined to pursue their own particular musical vision. "As pop in general has got more complex," says Nik Cohn of Davies, "so he's got simpler, always more childlike, until his songs have become as pared as nursery rhymes." What Davies has done is to record in brief vignettes the look and feel of contemporary British society. Anyone who cares to listen can discover a whole world waiting for him -- Britain seen from the private window of Ray Davies and The Kinks.

Who else would start an album with the sound of a telephone ringing, followed by an English voice inquiring, "Hello, who's that speaking, please?" in the most monocled, respectable tones? Who else would sing of the trials involved in being on a party line and not knowing the identity of the second party? Who else would threaten "I'm not voting in the next election/If they don't do something/About finding out the person/who is on my party line"? This wonderfully futile gesture could have meaning only in Britain, and brings to mind The Rolling Stones' inclusion of "the stay-at-home voters" in their tribute to the "Salt of the Earth".

The Kinks manage to capture and inspect the predicaments of all the down-and-outs around them. Where others may see the school hero, he of the strong jaw and golden hair who has just won the cross-country race and is being congratulated by the Duke of Edinburgh, The Kinks see the clod who never even entered the race, who can at best spend his time in masochistic hero-worship:

I am a dull and simple lad  
 Cannot tell water from champagne  
 And I have never met the Queen  
 And I wish I could have all that he has got  
 And I wish I could be like David Watts

The Kinks can distill the frustrations of the harried housewife into a song like "Two Sisters". The housewife envies the gay life of her unmarried sister and her fashionable friends, until one day:

She threw away her dirty dishes  
 Just to be free again  
 Her woman's weekly magazines  
 Just to be free again  
 And put the children in the nursery  
 Just to be free again

But seeing the faces of her children once again, she realizes the emptiness of her sister's life:

So she ran round the house with her curlers on  
 No longer jealous of her sister

It is hard to miss the irony here, the vague sense of -- what? (contempt? sadness?) -- that the phrase "With her curlers on" evokes.

### III.

The Kinks' preoccupation is not simply with the downtrodden. Many of their songs deal with the other end of the social spectrum: Britain's decaying aristocracy. Everywhere they are concerned with the decline in the life-styles of both the working class and the upper class, and their absorption by middle-class mediocrity. And infusing this whole process is a powerful element of nostalgia for bygone days and bygone ways.

The taxman's taken all my dough  
 And left me in my stately home  
 Lazing on a sunny afternoon

For those who inhabit this world the present is shaped by the past. Time and memory form the psychological superstructure of a changing world. Remembrance of things past is the only bulwark against an uncertain future, the one potential invariable in an unstable present. "Yes, people often change/But memories of people can remain."

A deft use of understatement comes easily to Davies in describing a broken love affair:

I went to our cafe one day  
They said that Donna walked away  
You'd think at least she might have stayed  
To drink her afternoon tea.

Resignation and nostalgia. The old, traditional ways are being corrupted. It's the end of an era. Some of the song titles tell the story: "Most Exclusive Residence for Sale", "End of the Season", "Last of the Steam-Powered Trains". The old days of empire are gone and it's "close of play" for all those old boys who carried the white man's burden to the four corners of the earth. Playing conditions are becoming rather foul, and tomorrow's sporting pages will read "GAME ABANDONED".

I just can't mix in all the clubs I know  
Now Labour's in, I have no place to go. . .

Well Labour's not in at the moment but you get the feeling that it hardly makes much difference.

Back in the scrum on a wet afternoon  
Down in the mud, dreaming of flowers in June

Ah friends, things were not always like this.

Long ago life was clean  
Sex was bad and obscene  
And the rich were so mean

But today "American tourists flock to see the village green/ They snap their photographs and say 'Goldarnit, isn't it a pretty scene!'"

Don't give up! All is not lost! The Kinks are coming to the rescue:

We are the Office Block Persecution Affinity  
God save little shops, china cups and virginity  
We are the Skyscraper Condemnation Affiliate  
God save tudor houses, antique tables and billiards  
Preserving the old ways from being abused  
Protecting the new ways for me and for you  
What more can we do?

In the old days, men may not have been equal, but everyone had his part to play, and all could share in the glory of the Empire.

I was born, lucky me  
In a land that I love  
Though I am poor, I am free  
When I grow I shall fight  
For this land I shall die  
Let her sun never set

Davies goes right to the heart of the law-and-order issue. It's a matter of identity:

Everything is in its place  
Authority must be maintained  
And then we know exactly where we are

But if you think The Kinks praise the past without reservation, think again. "Give the scum a gun and make the bugger fight/and be sure to have deserters shot on sight" says the commanding officer. "If he dies we'll send a medal to his wife." The Kinks have a definite point of view, but it is neither praise nor condemnation as such.

Some mother's son lies in a field  
Back home they put his picture in a frame  
But all dead soldiers look the same

Some corner of a foreign field that is forever England. But all dead soldiers look the same.

They put his picture on the wall  
They put some flowers in the picture frame  
Some mother's memory remains

Mr. Churchill said, we gotta fight the bloody battle to the very end. We gotta hold up our chins. We gotta show some courage and some discipline. This was their finest hour. But now the war is over. The years of sacrifice and rationing are over. And here is your reward for working so hard -- your own home, your own castle. You call it "Shangrila". What if it looks like all the other houses on the street? What's wrong with that? And she's bought a hat like Princess Marina's.

She's bought a hat like Princess Marina's  
To wear at all her social affairs  
She wears it when she's cleaning the windows  
She wears it when she's scrubbing the stairs  
But you will never see her at Ascot  
She can't afford the time or the fare  
But she's bought a hat like Princess Marina's  
So she don't care.

Arthur is The Kinks' Everyman -- "just a plain simple man in a plain simple working class position." All his life he's struggled to improve his lot, but "All the way he was overtaken/By the people who make the big decisions." What has he got now but his dreams of the past?

How is your life and your shangrila  
And your long lost land of hallelujah?

People are always taking photographs in The Kinks' world, to try to preserve things from the ravages of time. Not only objects, but feelings as well:

Picture book  
Of people with each other  
To prove they loved each other  
A long time ago

Perhaps love is the element that these people are searching for in the past, because they can no longer find it in the present.

Those happy days we spent together  
We thought our world would never change  
How the days go by  
And things will never be the same

Today Arthur and his children have nothing to say to each other. Even small talk no longer suffices:

How is your life insurance (nothing to say)  
How is your trade union (nothing to say)  
How is your independence (nothing to say)

So Arthur's children are off to Australia to start a new life. In the center-fold of the Arthur album we see an enormous kangaroo wearing boxing gloves filling the foreground, while on the horizon behind it a red-white-and-blue sun sets, and at the bottom of the picture a man wearing a striped black suit and holding an umbrella aloft sinks beneath the sea. Britannia rules the waves no longer

## V.

Arthur's children may sail off to Australia, but The Kinks will not be on the ship with them. It's Arthur's world The Kinks care about, not the promised land beyond the sunset.

Arthur we read you and understand you  
 Arthur we like you and want to help you  
 Oh! we love you and want to help you

Because, ultimately, Arthur's world is also the world of Ray Davies and The Kinks. In "Waterloo Sunset" we can find it all: the dirty old Thames, rolling forever into the night with its burden of history, the glare of taxi lights in the busy streets, the crowds swarming through the Underground stations.

But I don't feel afraid  
 As long as I gaze on Waterloo sunset  
 I am in paradise

Every day Ray Davies looks at the world from his window. The Kinks are in their place and they know where they are -- right where they started from, in their shangri-la.

\* \* \* \* \*

What can be seen from the foregoing is the extent to which The Kinks manage to expound a certain world-view in their music. It is not simply that they reflect certain points of view in their art (as who does not?), but that these points of view are both coherent (consistent with each other and interdependent) and self-conscious (The Kinks recognize their own biases).

Of recent albums, both Face to Face and Something Else by The Kinks include back cover liner notes by others outlining the features of the group's world -- "Daviesland" is the way one of them refers to it. The Village Green Preservation Society reproduces on its back cover the words to the album's title song, in which The Kinks outline their likes and dislikes. But most revealing is Arthur or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire. The liner notes here indicate that the songs of this album were used as the basis of a British television program, showing a day in the life of Arthur and his family -- the day on which Arthur's son and daughter-in-law leave for Australia. The songs on the album are related to each other, so that in their entirety they tell a story.

The form of the Arthur album is loosely that of the "rock opera", and follows the longer and more tightly integrated rock opera Tommy, by the English The Who. Tommy is the story of a deaf, dumb, and blind boy who is cured and becomes a pop-cult messiah, only to be eventually rejected by his fans, who are looking for an easy way to salvation. The parallels between Tommy and the position of rock stars like The Who themselves are there to be drawn, and togeth-

er with the very format of the rock opera indicate a self-consciousness in the artistic progression of popular music.

Of course it may be asked, at what point does popular music cease being popular and become music for an elite group? Is it meaningful to speak of the "artistic progression" of a popular form toward some ideal of "high art"? I have already noted that The Kinks, though still occasionally producing "hit" records, appeal more consistently to a smaller, more sophisticated audience. Insofar as a band succeeds in its artistic pretensions, is it not drawn even farther from what can legitimately be labelled "popular music"?

One of the most important developments of recent years in the popular/rock music scene has been the introduction of so-called "underground" FM radio stations, of which CHUM-FM in Toronto is a good example. These stations eschew the Hit Parade format, and program instead what is called "progressive rock" -- the more experimental, avant-garde, or "artistic" rock music. This has helped spur the trend away from hit-oriented music toward album-oriented music. Where before a performer or group would concentrate on making a "hit" song, and then center an album around one or two hit songs (with not too much attention paid to the quality of the remaining songs on the album), today there is an increasing tendency to concentrate on producing a good album first, and then extract one or two songs with high commercial potential to release as "singles" for the Hit Parade charts. Rock groups are increasingly judged on the merits of their entire outputs, rather than on the number of "hit" songs they have had. Also, the proliferation of groups, and the enormous quantity of albums being produced, means a specialization among groups in musical form and in the audiences to which they appeal.

On the other hand, the "progressive rock" field is not entirely divorced from the mass-oriented Hit Parade market, either in terms of songs or audiences. There is a considerable overlap between the two fields. The distinctions between "hit music" and "progressive music", and between "mass audience" and "specialized audience", are real, but also somewhat arbitrary, in the sense that these categories are not mutually exclusive. The fact that the most self-consciously "artistic" Kinks' album could form the basis of a television production for a mass audience is indicative of this.

There can be little doubt that the general self-awareness of rock performers and audiences in terms of artistic pretension and criticism is considerably higher today than it was fifteen years ago, when rock established itself as the predominant form of popular music. The development of the relationship between "popular art" and "high art" -- including the question of their compatibility or incompatibility -- will be one of the most interesting of the next few decades.





