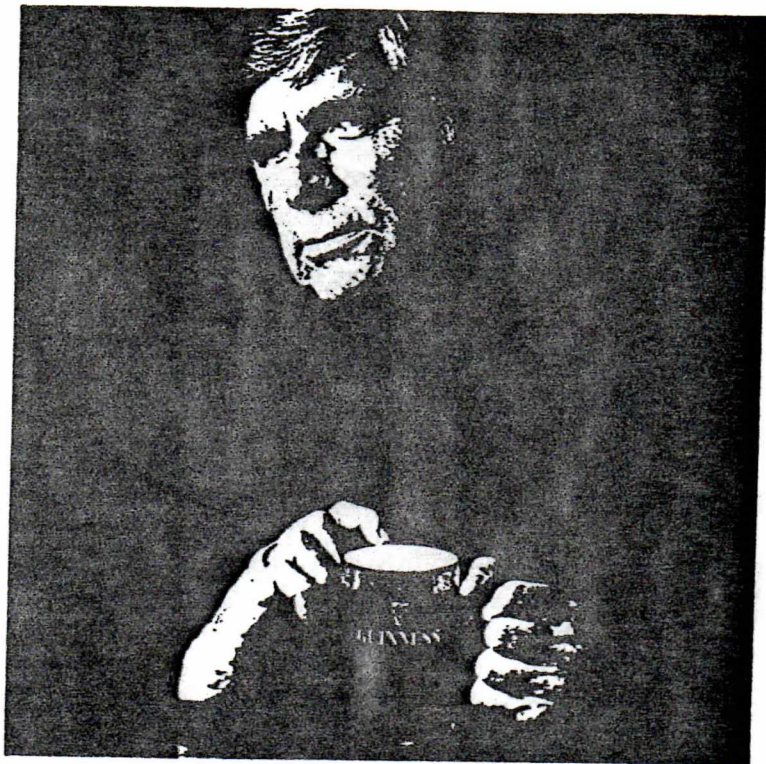


steve alhini's

100000000000

321001



Gene Roddenberry has a deep, dark secret.

GUINNESS

A secret shared and enjoyed since 1759.

Imported by Guinness Import Company, Stamford, CT 06901 © 1985



steve albini's

This

fanzine is named "Steve Albini's Lovegun" because Mr Albini named one of his songs: "Kim Gordon's Panties". [And Thurston Moore threatened to deck him for it - LJS] "Steve Albini's Lovegun #1" is "Ye Olde Sockes #2". I'd like my Ditmar to be a bronzed, inflated space-hopper, thanks.

I have, however, no intention of naming my next batch of homebrewed beer "Steve Albini's Lovegun" (unless it happens to leave a similar taste in the mouth).

This fanzine was christened long before Steve Albini became the John Zorn of grunge. So no trendiness was originally intended. Still confused? Good.

This fanzine is published by the "Whatever Happened To Pooh-Brown-Coloured Lady Scott Toilet Paper?" Press for Mr Warner. Please note our change of address:

C.O.A.

Ms Sussex & Mr Warner now reside at:
13 Frederick St
Brunswick
Victoria 3056
Australia

Any mail for either of us should be sent to the new address above.

"Steve Albini's Lovegun is available for the "usual" or its equivalent weight in single-malt scotch. As per "Ye Olde Sockes", this zine is being distributed largely at personal whim - although as I was too cheap to buy one of Australia Post's whizzo "So you've changed address?" kits, this serves as the official COA notice for all those whom I haven't told about our move yet. Letters Of Comment are invited but keep them short. I have no wish to publish a fanzine which gets suffocated under the weight of a monster wombat of a letter column. My thanks to respondents to "YOS" for the crisp brevity of their responses.

More warm and fruity thank-yous to those who have sent their zines to me and/or Ms Sussex. Your efforts were not in vain, you get this fine example of a zine in return.

My traditional nom-de-fanzine is Mr Warner. but

my family call me Julian. Lucy-Jane Sussex is who she is.

If you like this zine, you may also be interested in copies of ¡sPLa!, my ANZAPA contribution fanzine. Just write for a copy.

CONTENTS:

Lucy on DUFF & Stuff.....	..2
The Rambling Swancon 17 Report.....	..4
Lucy's Lucid Swancon 17 Report.....	..8
Random Diary Entry 01.06.92.....	..10
Random Diary Entry 25.06.92.....	..12
Random Diary Entry 11.10.92.....	..13
Random Diary Entry 21.03.93.....	..13
Letter to Mark and Vanessa.....	..14
Random Diary Entry 01.05.93.....	..17
Juffan's Top Thirty Albums for 1992.....	..17
Swancon 18 Report.....	..22
Fanzines Received.....	..26
Letters of Comment.....	..28
Why You Received this Zine.....	..30

NB: You'll notice from the dates above that the material in this zine is quite old. People have divorced, married, been born, died and moved house a lot since the first words of this zine were written. Most of this stuff is in chronological order. If you're confused, write and tell me.

LUNACY JESUS SEX

What I ask, am I, a female of the feminist ilk, doing in a fanzine called *Steve Albini's Lovegun*? I dunno, sometimes we just get used to other people's sense of humour. Like the title of this contribution, which is basically a computer generated anagram of my name: Lucy-Jane Sussex. The full list of anagrams took up a page, but the above was the weirdest. To some people it might not be funny, eg anybody seriously Christian, like the mathematician I knew when I was a child. I forget what his brand of religion was, but it possibly involved no contraception (he had six children in 12 years) and grace at every meal. I blotted my copybook by being asked to say my family's grace, and then having my mind go a complete blank. We did say grace at home occasionally, but I was damned if I could remember it. Anyway to wind up the anecdote, Dr X was devoted to spoonerisms, and addressed me by my christian names, spoonerised. I doubt the sweet innocent man was aware of the alternate meaning...

The DUFF platform describes me as a writer and editor. How I got there was a long and tortuous process, a mixture of nature and nurture. The family were academic/artistic, so when I started composing a perfectly dreadful saga about umn, fairy mice, at the age of 11, I was actually encouraged to continue it. I think I wrote eight chapters before losing interest. The document is still somewhere in the Sussex family archives, no doubt being preserved for blackmail purposes ('If you don't have us over for Christmas dinner, I'll sell 'The Whisper Trees' to the National Library!'). Now, having read of Louisa Lawson having her poems burnt by her mother, I realise how lucky I was to be born into an environment sympathetic to scribbling.

Mind you,

after 'The Whisper Trees' I was so busy growing up that I didn't do any writing for years. In my late teens I took up poetry, published in a youth anthology, then was tempted into sf via a workshop run by Terry Carr and George Turner. I placed a few sf stories, then had an editor write to me (my first ever fan letter!) suggesting I write for the adolescent market. Also along the way I got into editing C19th women writers via my job as researcher. It wasn't intentional, but I was sent off to read old magazines and I just kept encountering all these fascinating writers, crying out (perhaps literally, on some psychic level) to be reprinted. At present, my list of publications includes 2 editions of C19th crime writers, a collection of short stories, *My Lady Tongue & Other Tales*, nominally sf but marketed as mainstream by ye publisher, Heinemann, and a children's book. A novel and two anthologies of sf for teenagers, in which I got to crack the whip and edit living authors for a change, are out this year. Now if I could only find the ms of 'The Whisper Trees' and burn it...

As for fannish mischief, Julian put that phrase in the platform when I wasn't looking (we wrote each others' part of the platform). Well, I am of the opinion that life is too serious to be taken completely seriously, and always look for the levity in things. Thus I was attracted to the Tiptree award, a serious award with a touch of humour - chocolate typewriters indeed! Jane Tisell and I ran the first Tiptree cakestall outside the US, which gave me the opportunity to shamelessly bully people (particularly fannish males) into baking cakes.

Which brings me, circuitously, to something I didn't

make for the cakestall, namely Chilli Beer. This was another of my C19th discoveries, found in an 1878 women's magazine:

RECIPE:

Put 30 chillis into one pint of water, simmer over slow fire for twenty minutes. Take three cups of sugar, 2 teaspoons of cream of tartar, two teaspoons essence of lemon [or lemon juice]. Pour chilli water over this then add one gallon of cold water, two tablespoons of yeast, then bottle. Ready in twenty-four hours.

It tastes like peppery ginger beer. Try not to inhale when bringing the glass up to your mouth - the chilli smell worms its way into the sinuses worse than wasabi. It goes well with Mexican and Indian food. Also, it seems to be mildly alcoholic.

And,

since we're talking about food, I should mention the famous C19th Plum Duff, which was a flour pudding containing dried fruit, boiled in a bag. My researches have not yet unearthed a recipe, but I'm not sure I'd want to eat such a weighty dessert. Recently in a C19th diary I found mention of this dish, but spelt 'Plumb Duff', which struck me as a heavy metal pudding indeed, guaranteed to sink to the bottom of the stomach. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists the following meanings for Duff: dough (dialectal); the already mentioned dessert; spongy material, as in loaves, decaying vegetation, etc; coal dust; to play a golf shot badly; to fake cattle brands. Alas, there is no mention of fan funds, although the dictionary goes on to list duffle coats and duffers, etc.

Any suggestions how to get the fannish meaning of Duff into the dictionaries? Fame, or notoriety, seems to be a good way to be immortalised in a word, as is also eccentricity, like Dr Spooner, or full blown mania. Duff could be a disorder characterised by frantic fundraising for the rest of the candidates' natural (or unnatural) lives. Or an outstandingly tacky touting for votes. Or a spontaneous explosion caused by ingestion of chilli beer and lead-weighted flour pud. The possibilities are endless; but not endless, however, are the ways in which you, dear reader, can vote. In fact there is only one way...

THE RAMBLING SWANCON 17 REPORT

The

date now being the 5th of February 1992, Lucy and I are recently returned from Swancon 17, Western Australia's State SF convention for 1992. It was advertised as the "Natcon you have when you're not having a Natcon".

For non-Australians - an explanation: a non-alcoholic drink named "Clayton's" was marketed as "The drink you have when you're not having a drink". As a result the word "Clayton's" has taken its place in Australian English as an adjective meaning ersatz, fake, synthetic & etc. I've no idea what "Clayton's" tastes like.

They certainly had a National Convention's optimistic multi-strand programming. They had lots of guests. They had litfen and mediafen and even furry animal fen. ...And they had us.

Back to 1991 for a little while...

For about the first time ever I had got together enough money and time to be able to plan and book not one but two holidays ahead of time. Nine days over Christmas in Brisbane with Lucy's parents and sixteen days in Perth for Swancon and relative/friend visiting. I am much indebted to Kit Stevens, who in her capacity as an employee of Australian Airlines, booked travel for Lucy and I and for my younger sister Zoe. We flew to Brisbane the day after the fledgling Compass Airlines crashed. Were it not for my friendship with Kit, I might have been tempted by Compass' occasionally cheaper fares and thus left horribly in the lurch. Three people of our immediate acquaintance were greatly disadvantaged by the collapse and we were suitably relieved at our good fortune.

Melbourne had hardly seen a skerrick of summer by the time we flew to Brisbane and therefore the 30° + heat combined with high humidity knocked us out for a couple of days. Christmas, with Lucy's parents, her brother and his family and friends was celebrated in both the Polish style (as Lucy's sister-in-law is Polish) and the Australian style. As a consequence of that - and Marian Sussex's generosity - we received a bounty of presents. Aside from some of the usual large-family-gathering style trials and tribulations we had a fine time being

tourists in a city of which we knew little.

I was

very pleased to see my dear old friend from my young and silly Perth days - Ross White - in Brisbane, where he is now very settled, defacto-espoused and blessed with child. (Ross may be better known to members of the Society for Creative Anachronisms as "Senev Artnoc".) I told those who were assembled at the White residence about the things that Ross and I used to get up to in Perth and Ross steered the conversation on to his running of the Communist Folk Club in Brisbane and the joys of the (then) forthcoming Maleny Folk Festival. I'd already seen the prospectus for the festival and regretted the fact that I simply could not stay for the extra few days to see it. I'll have to wait for a National Folk Festival for the next star-studded cast of folkies.

We also met one of Australia's sf authors, Paul Collins, in the second-hand record and bookshop that he runs in the central city area of Brisbane. His shop had just moved to a better site and we were surprised at the volume of the "passing trade". Talk circled around the Australian SF publishing trade past and present and who's doing what with whom in the writing world. A Sydney fan who is so notorious that we've forgotten his name was in the shop and attempted to engage in the uncontrived name-dropping that occurred.

A traveller's tip: If you're going to Brisbane in the summer, stay in air-conditioned accommodation, be near a swimming pool and take an umbrella for the afternoon thunderstorms. The homemade chilli relish from the Petrie market is excellent. (So was Ross's home-made chilli relish for that matter. I must do a whole fanzine article on the joy of chillies one day.)

Back

in Melbourne for the inter-holiday three weeks, I was kept busy at work preparing and presenting my share of the last training session (9 days of it!) for the seven Graduate Administrative Assistants or GAAs whom I had been training for the past year.

Our expectation was that we would be able to transform raw recruits, fresh from the confusions of tertiary education, into the ultimate Immigration Officers in the space of a year. In a few weeks' time, when they apply for promotions, we will be able to judge whether our labours have been fruitful.

I had to forego any "thank goodness that's over" drinks on the last Friday of the course as Lucy and I were catching our plane to Perth at 7.00pm. Rather than describe any of our flights to and from Brisbane or Perth, let me just say that after too many business flights, I find air travel tedious but highly necessary. Thank goodness for personal cassette players which play only the best music - chosen by me of course. Lucky that Lucy shares some of my taste in music.

We

were met at Perth airport by Dave Arntzen who looked his typical scruffy but very amiable self. Dave and his wife Jenny would be known to some Perth fans as fringe fans, Westrek members and runners of the "Jenny's Place" Folk Club.

*As an aside it is interesting to note the interaction between fans and folkies in Perth. Writer Steven Dedman met his beloved at "Jenny's Place". Lee Smoire sings with Jenny, my friend Anne-Marie Allen and Anne-Marie's sister Mandy in a group who call themselves "Bosom Buddies". Maureen Gell is/was a committee member of the W.A. Folk Federation. Constable Paul Presbury gafiated from fandom to folkdom (if such truly be gafiation). Writer Sue Isle is a regular at "Jenny's Place" and various others drop in.

I could also opine regarding the remarkable similarities between SF convention and Folk Festival committees and the fates of those who have been foolhardy enough to serve on same. Maybe post-convention fafiation is a common event in many sub-cultures. Did I say this was an aside?*

The

original plan was that we would "house-sit" whilst Dave holidayed in sunny Kalbarri (600Km north of Perth). This would give us the run of a large house-with-folkclub-attached for two weeks, disturbed only by the clubbers on Sunday nights.

Fan Quiz Question No.23:

Australian Science Fiction Fandom is run by:

- a) The Great Melbourne SMOF Conspiracy Inc.
- b) The Real Official Cery Handfield Fan Club.
- c) Ron Goulart, ghostwriting for Bruce Gillespie.
- d) Steam.

(answers on page 25+1cc/fn)

However, various events led Dave to abandon his trip, so we took over the main bedroom and Dave consigned himself to the "spare room". I hope Dave's back hasn't suffered from the bed in the spare room. The room is a reasonable size but the sheer amount of clothes and books stored there (how did you know a lot of it is SF?) makes life a bit of a squeeze in there. We'll just have to return the hospitality next time Dave has a business trip to Melbourne.

Life at Hedley street is never quiet. Dave runs a computer business ("One Stop Computing") and does recording work ("Acoustic Instrument Recording"). Jenny does much of the running of the folk club and has meetings with her church group. With the addition of relatives dropping in for business and/or pleasure there was rarely a quiet moment in the place. The two phones, private and business rang often and at odd hours. Luckily we were just holidaying and didn't have to get up early for anyone and there were two answering machines to take care of less considerate callers.

Dave was very good in giving us lifts to places when we didn't expect them. Thanks Dave.

As

a result of the way that two weeks rapidly filled up with lunch dates and meetings, I am determined to reserve some time for "going bush" and doing some exploring next time we are in Perth. Lucy and I both had old friends to catch up with and work contacts to renew. Just "catching up" and one convention occupied most of our time.

The first weekend of our stay was largely occupied - for Lucy - by the Writer's Workshop. In theory, the Workshop was to be a live-in, two-dayer where one lived, ate and drank sf writing. Lucy chose to stay at Dave Arntzen's rather than St George's College where the event was being held. I just briefly said hello to Dave Luckett and Ian Nichols on the Saturday and stayed as an observer and milk-fetcher on the Sunday. Pip Maddern generously allowed me to venture opinions on the works of the writers at the workshop, despite the fact that I don't (to anyone's knowledge) write SF.

There was definitely the smell of something promising in the works presented at the Workshop. Lucy and I are currently trying to get Dave Luckett to put some effort into marketing his short stories - and into writing more.

We

managed to spend one day on Rottnest Island - home of the infamous "Ratcons" - courtesy of my sister Yvette. Rottnest is a large island which is visible on the horizon from Perth. A Dutch explorer saw the small wallaby-like marsupials (actually called "quokkas") on the island from a distance and thought they were rats. Hence the name.

Our day on "Rotto" (not "Rotty" as Lucy called it) was very cheap as Yvette's husband John works for Rottnest Island Ferries, and Yvette "arranged" things for us. All we paid for was a bus trip around the island and lunch. We got our annual dose of beach, sun, sand and sunburn and I re-indulged in my childhood hobby of poking at interesting things in rockpools. **Look - it's a Blue-Ringed Octopus - the really poisonous ones. Isn't it cute? Look at the way it's waving its tentacles at me. Look at the way those blue rings really pulse! It must be annoyed at something... Look - it's a Stonefish - the really poisonous ones .. etc.**

We had my youngest sister, Zoe with us, and Yvette and her three sons - Ben who is 5, Brendan who is 22 months and Jarrad who is 6 months old. John was working but probably glad not to have to look after this bunch. Goodness knows how Yvette survives shopping and other excitements with two in a two-seater pram and one roaming free. We didn't lose anyone but it wasn't for lack of opportunity. Zoe was also on holiday in Perth (My parents live in Hobart with Zoe and Jocelyn - my youngest two siblings.) and was ostensibly there to help baby-sit

the young 'uns. However, no-one had previously tested out my dear 14-year-old sister's affinity for babies. It has probably cured her for life.

Isn't

it funny what genes can do for you? Dad is thinnish and just under six foot. Mum is not thinnish and just over five foot. Now somehow, both Zoe and I have managed to be both tall and "big-boned". "Zo" has the sort of build which I term "agricultural" - denoting an ability to replace the oxen in times of hardship - and which evokes zummerzet-style "aarr tharrs a foin lass" comments. Me, I've just discovered middle-age spread a little early.

I re-discovered my favourite old record shops in Perth. Dada records seems to have turned into an "Alternative Superstore" with floorspace to rival the Virgin Megastore in Melbourne, but rather better contents. They must probably be one of the largest remaining repositories of vinyl in Australia (not counting the temporary moveable feasts of vinyl at record fairs). It's strange how I can find albums that I've never seen before in a Perth record shop - it being so isolated over there and all. I'm not complaining, mind.

When

we got to the convention on Friday night it had that typical lukewarm feeling that comes from people not having found their friends yet and committee members still being in the frantic phase - having not yet got to the relaxed "Fuck it - they can work it out for themselves" phase (at which point things strangely do start working).

We were surprised to find Justin Ackroyd at the convention as he had managed to keep his attendance a secret from most. He was gratified to discover by the end of the con that he had sold well beyond his expectations. (Er... he sold books - he's a bookseller. What did you think he'd sell out of at a con?) People who have to live by their sales skills seem to have an odd sort of edge to their existence. Some writers seem to have it as well. The woman who knows most travel secrets - Kit Stevens - was able to have a quiet chuckle and hug old friends when she came to say hello on Saturday. Nick Stathopoulos had brought Cath McDonnell and

her sister with him (a superior form of baggage!) by car - Jack Herman had just started a new job and was unable to accompany Cath. Valma Brown and Leigh Edmonds were staying at the hotel and said hello as we arrived. Steveg (Steve Gunnell to you non-Westralians) was in fine fettle but long-time chum Maureen Gell was elsewhere. Other surprise attendees were Zebee Johnston, Bob Ogden and his fiancée. Zebee had come specially from Adelaide to be at the con and although I had been in touch with Bob previously, I was under the impression that he had pretty well gafiated.

I was also surprised by two rather polite "lads" who said hello during the con. One was Evan Luckett Beasley, who addressed me as "Mr Warner", a perhaps unintentionally correct form taught him by his ma and pa. The other lad was Steven Curtis, son of Julia Bateman, who had grown beyond my recognition in three years. Now Steven looks just like any other fan (be that praise or scorn?). A couple more foes to meet over the gaming table - Steven already being an accomplished gamer and Evan having it in his blood.

Dr

Craig Hilton was called upon to minister to a patient early in the convention, when a young fan got queasy during a horror video, walked out of the room and walked into a door - with a loud thud. Said fan then hit the floor in the traditional sack of potatoes style. The good doctor interrupted his panel member duties to tend to the unfortunate person. Craig produced some disturbingly accurate caricatures of some of the convention guests, portraying them all as "furry animals". I don't think that all of those caricatures were necessarily flattered but there was no denying the quality of the work. Maybe they'll appear in a fanzine sometime soon. Craig's friend from Melbourne, and fellow contributor to the "Rowrbrazzle" APA, Paul Kidd, charmed all he met with his friendliness and modesty. Not all appreciated his "furry animal with big tits" business card, but then "anthropomorphic" cartoons are not everyone's cup of yak fat.

Ian Nichols was in his "harbinger of doom" mode, predicting a disastrous con of almost Suncon-ish proportions. There seemed to be a small hint of malicious glee in his voice.... The con committee had put some of the guests of honour on too many panels (and that favourite old chestnut - the g.o.h. being on two panels at once) and due to a lack of

venues some program items became quite mobile. Perth turned up the solar heat for the event, possibly making some Grey Company and Society for Creative Anachronisms members wish that they had chosen a rather cooler hobby. There were supposed to be examples of Mediaeval combat conducted but few brave souls would risk heat exhaustion in heavy, sweaty and smelly armour.

Sean

and Trish McMullen were there as additional guests of honour - Sean's new book not being quite ready for launch at the time unfortunately. Terry Dowling was the principal guest of honour and was conspicuously in the company of Keira McKenzie (WA fan artist) during the con. I am told that they are conspicuously not in each other's company since though.

Nick Stathopoulos had lots of fun being one of the "media" guests but he was very keen to see dolphins at one of the spots where they regularly show up on the WA coast. This was possibly to test out some of the "dirty dolphin" stories he has been telling at dinner lately (along with the Japanese pubic hair story - don't ask). I haven't asked him what he actually did when he got to see the dolphins yet. Hmm.

People like Don and Anne Griffiths, Tony De Groot, Greg Turkich and even Gina Goddard and Terry Chilvers seem to have become some of the "elders" of WA fandom. Gina seems to have lost the "Junior Earth Mother" of WA fandom tag since I left the State. Must think of a more fitting appellation for her current status. Sue Leighton still looks like a young fan, belying her *ahem* years.

I caught up with Paul Stevens at his place of work, in Myer in the city, for a coffee and a chat, and learned later that he had tried to come to the convention. Paul went to the front bar and asked where the convention was being held. The barmaid told him that there was nothing like that being held here so he went home.

We snuck out with Justin Ackroyd for a quiet dinner with John and Sarah McDouall. A new and very cheap hawker-style Malaysian restaurant provided us with rather good food to consume between the chatter. John did make his traditional appearance for the auction on Sunday, of which I

caught the tail end. Justin Ackroyd was determined to get rid of a book which no-one would bid for so he gave audience members a page each. I am now the proud possessor of the index page of a book on extricating oneself from a de-facto marriage.

...but just watch out for that thirty-eighth Cunegonde!

THE LUCID LUCY SWANCON REPORT

Swancon

began for me about a week before it did for most other attendees. Phillipa Maddern, assorted WA writing types and I assembled at a Gothick pile called St George's College, where an sf writing workshop was being held. I had foolishly agreed to help out, and thus, some few hours after I hopped off the Eastern states aeroplane, found myself severely jet-lagged, sitting under a tree discussing post-holocaust vampires (apropos Guy Blackman's submission to the workshop).

Some well-known fans were at the workshop, like Ian Nicholls and Dave Luckett; others such as Guy, who edits a Syd Barrett fanzine in his spare time, were new faces. However, this was one of those workshops that *clicked* - the level of fiction and of criticism was high, and got even better over the writing weekend. Highlight was probably whilst we sat outside St George's chapel arguing over a Dave Luckett story (sell it, Dave!), or rather the story's setting: just how close to a red giant could a planet get? And what would its tides be like? We gradually became aware of people, rather formally dressed, congregating outside the chapel, and before we knew it we were in the midst of a full-blown white wedding - pages, flowergirls, tulle clad bride et al. They gave us funny looks, but we merrily ignored them.

After

the workshop there was some respite, but not rest, since Mr Warner and I were staying in a Bentley household best described as *interesting*. 'Twas a computer business, a recording studio and on

Sunday nights - a folk club. This meant that the house was a flurry of computer clients, folkies, three cats, two dogs, a housekeeper, a gardener, and assorted others, including a local Baptist church group. Even the con itself was quieter, and possibly slightly less populated.

However, one can't grouch about a host who gave us lifts to the Ascot Inn, also a place in the *interesting* category. The suburb itself specialises in racehorses - hence the name - and the hotel, while not decorated with horse brasses and mummified Phar Laps, was definitely catering for the equine set. Stretch limos full of champagne bottles and ladies who whinnied when they laughed was an interesting contrast to ye scruffy old sf mob.

The con opened with a "meet the guests" session, at which I sat on the dais with the nobs, feeling very much the token gal, until Pip Maddern made her appearance. Later I nicked off and started chatting to all the folk I had either met before or who had figured large in Mr Warner's scurrilous tales: 'Uuurgh, remember that night at Swancon 10, and how Nico got dressed up as Lady Godiva and chased you around the bar waving a string of gourmet sausages on the end of a pitchfork?' Umm no, he doesn't actually.

New Agers: The Unconscious in search of the improbable.

I was nattering to Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown, about aeroplanes, when a red-headed person came charging out of the Visual Horror panel and collided with an oak door. He fell to the ground, so Doctor Craig Hilton was summoned, luckily not wearing one of his animal costumes, which could have been alarming to someone concussed. 'I know I may look like a giant woodpecker but I'm actually a medic. Trust me.' No damage was done to either door or door-hitter, but it was certainly one way of starting the con with a bang.

Next day (Saturday) I was only scheduled for an afternoon panel, on SF and the Mainstream, or the fading away of SF...I'm not sure really. All these panels tend to amalgamate in the memory, as they starred the same faces, same speakers and sometimes the same arguments. I was supposed to be on ten, but I can't now remember how many I actually did. One thing I do recall is how informal and relaxed these sessions were, with no formal

distinction between panel and audience, no tendentious prepared speeches, just people entering into large, friendly conversations. It was a pleasant change.

However,

as I was saying before I got sidetracked, Saturday was relaxed, despite the 40 degree heat. Down by the river, SCA and Grey Company types had set up tents, and were trotting around in full chain-mail and leather galligaskins. Amazingly, though they dripped sweat like sponges, they kept their gear on throughout. If there was a face of the hero in sf (to borrow the title of one panel) then that day it was surrounded by chain-links, and the colour of a rotten beetroot.

Another hero on the day was Julie Lewis, whom I spotted during the Fading Mainstream or the Madding Famestream panel, taking copious notes. Julie is a distinguished biographer (of Olga Masters) and a member of the Australian Literature Board. Swancon had applied for funding from that body, unsuccessfully, but Julie had dropped by anyway, just to see what a Festival of the Imagination was like. That she was intrigued and entertained by what she saw bodes well for future convention funding applications.

Saturday

also featured author readings. I stood up to read in an immodest t-shirt [J says this implies decolletage. Actually, it was a promo t-shirt for *My Lady Tongue*] Sean sat down and did falsetto voices. Pip refused to use the microphone and read a gruesome tale in a quiet but authoritative voice. Terry turned on a full-blown theatrical spectacular, sans props. Four very different styles, but they worked well, to judge from audience reaction.

Later that evening Nico, Craig Hilton, Mr Warner and others were having a quiet blues jam, when a stranger wandered over and asked to borrow a guitar. This turned out to be Greg Franklin, one of the stars of the con's media stream, who, due to programming, we had completely missed so far. Craig handed over his guitar, which suddenly found itself playing complex blues licks. The music started to cook like a Southern gumbo, and I was

sent off to locate a bass-player (not such an impossible quest as it might seem, as there had been three around earlier that evening). Greg teaches guitar professionally; Craig later reported that his guitar had complained about its work-out all the way back to Collie.

The big feature proposed for Sunday was a hypothetical-style presentation on Utopias, featuring anyone and everyone from the amiable Mr Jeremy Byrne to Cath McDonnell to Sally Beasley and yrs truly. Organiser of this spectacular was one Scot Snow, who told Pip Maddern to sit down in such dog-handler tones that she promptly barked at him. However, the event, though much awaited, (Sally having organised her child-minding well in advance) did not occur, due to Scot developing a boil on his bot, or his foot, or something, I forget which.

Another Sunday feature was the Aphelion pre-launch, involving much champagne and orange juice, and at which even non-Aphelionites got to do some signing. Among other things, the pre-launch was notable for the statement that Australian sf had been dominated recently by Academic writers. Gosh wow, and would you also believe that George Turner is the Queen of Sheba Professor of English Literature at the University of the Black Stump? Perceptual differences aside, the pre-launch was the point at which the con stocks of *My Lady Tongue* sold out, so I rushed around happily shutterbugging.

Sunday,

or was it Monday? All I know is that at one stage the auction was held, with John McDouall presiding, his one appearance at the Ascot apart from a brief trip to take some revellers out to dinner. He had great difficulty finding the con - though he was luckier than one semi-gafted Old Melburnian, who fronted at the bar and got the response 'What convention?' and hence tooted off home, much puzzled. I know sometime during the weekend I was seated on the verandah with a group of fen who got mightily annoyed by an interminable soundcheck. (I add here that the live bands at the Ascot Inn could only be described as abysmal.) The 'Testing, One, Two!' eventually caused the listeners to chant 'Three!' in unison. Nobody thought of yelling 'Buckle your Shoe!', but this might have been well above the roadies' level.

There is a point at the close of conventions when

things begin to blur, and the hallways fill with people hugging each other and dropping bags on committee members' feet, possibly with intent. Notable events? Well, Paul Kidd gave me his business card which, as Paul is a member of furry fandom, as well as a noted games designer, featured a squirrel girl with Playboy-type breasts (a silicon squirrel?). Nick Stathopoulos looked tired, but started bounding up and down at the prospect of a trip to meet some dolphins at Bunbury. The MUSFA reps - Danny, Beky et al - were smugly contemplating a trip home without the hassles of their last venture west. Read Ian Gunn's account of their mishaps in the latest *Mimosa* - highly entertaining, although undoubtedly hellish at the time.

There was a Dead Dog party at Tim and Narelle's, and also a Somewhat-Decomposed Dead Dog party, held at the computer-business-and-folk-club three days later. The atmospheres were equally convivial at both events. In retrospect conviviality was, I think, the keynote at Swancon 17. I arrived at the Ascot Inn on the Friday with considerable trepidation, but I left with a grin. If there's one word which sums up the Imagination Fest, it was - friendly.

RANDOM DIARY ENTRY: SUNDAY 01.06.92

Woke

up at about 8.30 - or was it 7.30? We hadn't set the clocks back to adjust for the cessation of daylight saving yet. Anyway, my throat was dry and my bladder wasn't. Pretty normal for a man who's had a few drinks the night before at a party. It was another of those Michelle {Muijsert} and James {Styles} gigs where we wondered how they still managed to cohabit. Although Feb 29, so the newspapers tell us, is traditionally the day where women may propose to their loved ones, James was celebrating 22 days of not enjoying de-facto-conjugal rights. All sorts of odd people that Michelle knows were there but none of James' loco-driver mates. Greg Hills was there, having a getting-to-know-you type chat and accompanying foot-massage with Arlene - an "old friend" of James. Roman Orszanski arrived with his "fiancee" Lyn Wolfe and Justin - an occasional MSFC member who does not wish to be confused with Justin Semmel (or Ackroyd). Roman was merry when he arrived. James and Greg and I were separately attempting to reach the

depths of "merriment" that we most enjoyed. Someone (male) did an impromptu paid strip out the back. Shortly after that, Lucy must have decided that things were getting a bit silly and took us home. I must admit that I was reduced to drinking James' "Wattle Lager" by that stage. I don't mind a beer being slightly sweet if it has the high %age alcohol which usually accompanies such a quality, but "Wattle" is unexceptional in all facets of its being. Most of the people who tasted it said it was like cat's piss. Desperation makes us less choosy I s'pose.

I was

awake. But I went back to bed. There was the possibility of playing board games with Alan Stewart and Mark Loney and Nick Price, and there was this record fair on at the Townhouse Hotel (venue of many Melbourne cons, much to Alan's chagrin), but I went back to bed. And so to dream... snooze... until about 10.30. I think it was Alan ringing me about the games session probably falling through that woke us up. Neither Mark nor Nick had returned Alan's message left on their answering machine, and as I was thinking of dragging Bruce Gillespie along to the record fair, Alan dropped the gaming date.

Coffee

preceded breakfast which preceded a shower which preceded lunch. I was as awake as I usually am on a Sunday and I didn't have a hangover. Eris was smiling upon me. It must have been that I've been dropping her name lately.

Battle plan for the day - well, not so much a plan as a bunch of ideas which were scraped together and just happened to fit quite neatly - was that we would drive to Richmond to inspect a house that was available for rent and open for inspection. Whilst in Richmond we would go to Mark and Nick's and see if they wanted a lift to the record fair and then go to Bruce and Elaine's place in Collingwood, pick up Bruce, drop me and the other three lads at the fair and leave Lucy free to drive home and write strange things on the computer while no-one was around to watch. I must have really done something to tickle Eris' funnybone because everything went to plan.

As part of the dithering-around in the morning process we also saw bits of the tape I had made of the "Triple-Jay Hot 100". This was a radio and TV simulcast of the ABC's National Youth Radio Station's listener's favourites. These were supposedly the best songs of all time - according to JJJ's listeners. They must have short memories, because Nirvana managed to get into the number one and three spots with "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and "Lithium" respectively. Number two was that hoary old favourite - Joy Division's "Love Will Tear Us Apart". If the statistics are to be believed then the Cure must be Australia's most popular "alternative" rock band as they had a large number of songs in the "Hot 100". They got Bob "The Blob" Smith to introduce his own songs as they came up and the chubby little popster sounded quite chuffed.

We

were looking at houses because our landlord is selling our current abode. Hence the large noticeboard outside with the usual glowing description of the tatty-looking place behind it. It claims that we enjoy the luxury of three double bedrooms. This probably means that there are three places in the house where one could conceivably place a double bed - vertically or horizontally. We are becoming experts at "real estate agent-speak", having combed the newspapers for some weeks now, visited a select few houses and compared descriptions with reality. For select few, read "28 or 29". The most promising place so far is a large place that a workmate of mine currently lives in. The one and only drawback of the house is that it is in Canterbury, which is further out than we would like to live. However, it's close to a train station and only about 15 minutes by car from the city. We'll see.

The house we looked at today was in an old State Housing estate. It was a duplex (semi-detached to you Poms) house of almost identical age and design to a house we'd seen on Saturday in Northcote. Three bedrooms, large lounge, toolshed, off-street parking and a nice big lemon tree out the back for \$170 a week. I thought it was pretty good. Lucy has reserved her judgement.

Mark had returned only the night before from a four-day driving holiday with his ladyfriend Vanessa along the Great Ocean road. He was complaining about the false advertising of the "Twelve

Apostles". They, being eight monolithic entities that poke out of the sea near the coast (a ninth got washed away some time ago), used to be known as "The Sow and her piglets" or some such name. The new name is not accurate but it is a bit more grand-sounding.

Nick was doing a wincing-and-mincing John Wayne impression, brought on by his activities the previous day - using muscles that didn't normally get such a serious workout. The cause was a rafting trip down the Thompson River. None of us knew where the river was (not even Nick !! - he hadn't been paying attention), but we eventually located it on the map. We think he must have gone down the stretch below the Thompson Dam. I assume that the Thompson is a snowmelt river coming down from Victoria's ski-slope country.

Fortified with coffee and tea we left for Bruce and Elaine's. As we sat there with the engine running, waiting for Bruce to put his shoes on, Elaine arrived with her two sisters and a pot plant. Her two sisters said hello and Elaine brandished the hairy-marigold-ish thing at me. We grabbed Bruce and ran before Elaine could attempt a forlorn warning to him about not spending too much.

We four lads separated at the Townhouse and sought that which might satisfy our own individual vices. Bruce didn't find the Green On Red e.p. he was searching for, but went away with a few sixties rarities anyway. Didn't see what Mark and Nick purchased. Bruce departed first, walking home and then Mark and Nick together - leaving me to browse until people started taking their boxes of records away. One stall-holder recognised me as a serious punter and offered a discount for bulk purchases. At the end of the day I got away with:

- ◆ The just-released "Visions of You" CD single (if you can call a CD with five mixes of the same song - totalling half an hour of music - a single) by Jah Wobble's Invaders Of The Heart. And for less than \$5.
- ◆ "Eugene Van Beethoven's 69th Sinfunny". Which is a double-IP of Eugene Chadbourne and 'chums playing live. Apart from some of Eugene's inimitable original compositions they manage to do songs by Joni Mitchell, Roger McGuinn, the Beatles, Ray Davies, Thelonus Monk, Eric Dolphy, Bob Dylan, Pharoah Sanders and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. Phew!
- ◆ "Rat Music for Rat People" - live tracks from the cream of California's hardcore punk bands from 1982.
- ◆ Two albums by Brand X - "Unorthodox Behaviour" and "Moroccan Roll". You could be

forgiven for thinking that Brand X were just a bunch of Jazz-Rock noodlers from the late seventies (featuring now-famous Phil Collins!) but their bass-player, Percy Jones, is truly amazing. I'd be prepared to buy almost anything that Percy played on - and he's played on some odd records.

- ◆ The twelve-inch single of "Perfect Way" by Scritti Politti. I'd played my vinyl album of "Cupid & Psyche '85" so much that it had worn out ("Perfect Way" being one of the best songs on it). After buying a CD version of the album to replace the ragged lp I was horrified to discover that the CD was completely different to the original album. Same songs but radically different mixing. Erk Alors! Not everything about CD is wonderful. (Understatement of the Week.)
- ◆ "Envy" by Arto Lindsay's Ambitious Lovers. If you can imagine "Girl from Ipanema" Latin softness mixed with modern electronic percussion and then further enhanced with Arto's "guitar attacked with a cheese-grater" noises then you've got a rough idea of what this is like. Arto has learnt to sing in the Astrud Gilberto manner since his really rough days with DNA.
- ◆ "Colombia Colly" by "Jah Lion". Reggae initiates would know that "Jah Lion" was really Lee "Scratch" Perry in his role as toaster - adding his own chants and exhortations over the top of popular reggae rhythms of the day. I was rather pleased with finding this one as it was recorded in 1976 when "roots" reggae and Lee Perry were at their peak. Nowadays Lee Perry still records likeable music but he is a confirmed nutter - hence songs about Inspector Gadget and other oddities.

I'm

starting to have problems similar to Bruce Gillespies'. The wooden cabinet that I had made up about two years ago to accommodate my record collection is now full. There was plenty of spare space when it was made but the 2000+ albums are now spilling out. And I've started to buy CDs as well. The fifty or so of them have only filled one shelf of a bookcase so far.

Bruce was attempting to solve some of his storage problems by giving away the vinyl records that he had managed to replace with CDs. Which is nice

for people like me who don't mind receiving free vinyl - thank-you Bruce - but it compounds my own storage problems. I think a trip to my friendly carpenter is called for. Maybe I can get a cabinet for the stereo made up at the same time - and a bookshelf - and.. and.. and.

The rest of today has been spent listening .. and writing.

(Postscript for Scritti Politti fans {this means you Roger Weddall} - I have since discovered that the mixes of "Perfect Way" on the vinyl lp, the CD, and the two different versions on the 12" single are all different. Pity the poor completist.)

END ENTRY.

RANDOM DIARY ENTRY: SUNDAY 25.06.92

Today I write from somewhere I didn't expect to be when I last wrote in my "diary". I'm just two blocks away! Different house but same suburb. We'd gone to look at this place at the same time as our old house was being auctioned (thereby avoiding the temptation to point out all of our old place's faults to potential buyers). So here we are now in a house which is bigger and more sensibly laid-out than our old one, but a lot colder. It'll probably be fine in summer; however, high ceilings with no insulation make it a bugger to heat. All of the other places that we looked at fell through for one reason or another and we were left with this. It was about the only terrace house that we both thought was reasonable (avoid letting me lecture you about the evils of terraces in Carlton and Fitzroy) and which was large enough for our "family": man + woman + computer + electric guitar @ 1 bedroom each = 4 bedroom house.

Lucy

now has a room which is large enough to accommodate two desks, a computer, all of her books and a bed to flop on when needs be. I have a room which is tiny yet accommodates six crates of homebrew, the homebrew kit, lots of tools and empty boxes and the aforesaid geetar. Thankfully this room is at the back of the house. (Imagine, if you will, the scene: the fragrant fumes of hops and yeast permeate the air as the atonal strains of "Concerto for Saucepan-Lid and Startled Cat in Something Flat", as wrestled out of the Warner

geetar, attempt to cut jagged holes in that selfsame air.)

Add to those a capacious main bedroom, a spare bedroom which is mainly used for ironing, a bloody cold but wide hall, a good-sized lounge, kitchen, pantry/ passageway, bathroom, laundry and loo and you have the full house. Unfortunately, the back yard is concreted in but we are very slowly "greening" it up with useful pot-plants. ("Hot" tip: the most productive of all of our plants are the chillie bushes. Very few of our home-grown firebombs are needed to make curry for two.)

Inside

the house is evidence of our first attempts at collecting furniture. I have been averse to buying furniture for a long time - preferring Robert Fripp's "small and mobile" philosophy to the idea of owning several pantech-nicon-loads of padded mahogany. The house, unfurnished as it was, dictated otherwise. We now have our own new futon, kitchen cupboards, bookshelves and clothes-racks. My dear friend Ana (only one "n" - she's Portuguese) from work kindly lent us two two-person sofas which push together. We declined the offer of the cushionless mahogany sofa ("It's no good for sex", Ana told me..).

RANDOM DIARY ENTRY: MONDAY 11.10.92

So there I was at work, given the task of arguing that the Chinese Student Pro-Democracy movement was driven by "bourgeois liberalism" when all of the texts I had been given to read were arguing against me. I have the thankless task of tearing apart the "rebel voices" and consigning them with all of the other "ugly chinamen" into the vast "soy sauce vat of chinese culture" (all other people's metaphors).

(Perhaps I should explain that I've recently started work in the "Determination of Refugee Status" Branch of our Department, which means interviewing refugee status applicants and deciding whether they should be allowed to stay in the country. It's not easy, I can assure you.)

And then on the tram home, I'm reading my text on Chinese History - specifically regarding the original Taoists: Lao-Tzu and Chuang-Tzu. We're talking Third Century B.C. Anarcho-Veggie-Punks here:

pre-dreadlock and pre-pigtail back-to-nature boys. Stuff the system and its Confucian aristos.

And then Lou Reed coos through my headphones:

"Life's like Sanskrit read to a pony,
 I see you in my mind's eye strangling on your tongue
 What good is knowing such devotion
 I've been around - I know what makes things run...
 ... What's good?
 Life's good -
 But not fair at all."

I used to have a headache but then I had a little smile.

RANDOM DIARY ENTRY: SUNDAY 21.03.93

Well,

it's over a year since I started writing this damned fanzine and it's about time I got it off the computer and into print. (No guarantees of that happening soon however.) Today's Sunday 21 March 1993. We're off to Swancon 18 soon in Perth - this time it's the Australian National Science Fiction Convention. Which won't make that much difference. I expect to see pretty much the same faces with one or two more extra blow-ins from Sydney and Melbourne. If there's anyone there from Adelaide, Canberra or Brisbane I'll be surprised. The only Taswegian who would possibly show their face is Robin Johnson - having been a guest of honour one year in W.A. Kit organised flights for us again, but probably for the last time. Australian Airlines are "rationalising" their operations, which basically means dumping a lot of staff like Kit. How come that companies always have to sack people to become "leaner and meaner", so that we can be dragged out of the recession, so that there will be less unemployment? When do all of these lean and mean companies start hiring again? I bought a copy of "Private Eye", the British satirical magazine on Friday. Apart from the usual funny bits, the rest is quite disturbing. As a journal of nepotism, payola, fraud and straight-out crime in Britain, "Private Eye" paints a very dismal picture of Britain-Under-Major (The acronym for that is BUM - how amusing!). Another reason for being smug about living in Australia! (Hello Joseph!).

LETTER TO MARK AND VANESSA

The

next "body of text" (technical literary term there folks) consists of extracts from a letter which Lucy and I recently sent to Mr and Mrs Loney in Washington U.S.A.

Letter to Mark and Vanessa (Slight Return):

We're off to Perth (again) for two weeks over Easter. Lucy is an invited second-string guest of honour, which does at least mean that we get a room in the ConHotel for the duration. (Although I hope we don't have the same experience as Nick Stathopoulos had last year: being awoken at some godforsaken hour to be reminded about being on a panel later on.) I hope that we'll get to do a bit more touristy stuff this time - rather than catching up with my old friends. Dave Luckett was mumbling something about going around the South-West with Terry Pratchett or something. Which reminds me - last time I spoke to the Nichols he was in hospital. He had a bad back. Bad enough to be in hospital anyway. He'd been operated on in Royal Perth and was recuperating for a couple of days in the Repat hospital. He had a visitor that he was keen to get back to when I rang so I didn't get much out of him. I suspect that the visitor was the married woman who he's having a torrid affair with (well, according to Dave anyway).

We will, of course, have a Rail Baron game when I am in Perth and Eddie-Baby will do his usual shouting and screaming. If you're not there to play with us then that's just your own fault. Jack Herman and some NewSouthWelshfen have got the Rail Baron bug seriously and they'll be taking the train across to Perth - playing RB all the way. Jack was trying to teach me strategies for RB when he was down in Melbourne at the "Roger's Picnic Without Roger". All I could do was chuckle.

Incidentally - the RPWR was the biggest fannish event I've seen in ages (Lucy says Roger's funeral was even bigger, but then I wasn't there). All sorts of people came out of the woodwork. Peter Burns made one of his extremely rare appearances (without Yoko of course). Irwin, Wendy and Adrian Hirsh came along - which is also a rarity. Cindy Evans came minus Matthew Clarkson, but then she's been seen a lot without him lately. I

don't think there's anything wrong between them - it seems that Matthew just spends one hell of a lot of time at work. All of the usual suspects were there: The Middlemiss/Mills clan, the Ortlieb clan, Bruce Gillespie and Elaine Cochrane, "Miss Jane" Tisell, Justin Ackroyd and Jenny Chudecki, Ian Gunn and Karen Pender-Gunn, Carey, Jo, Philip and Breanna Handfield, Alan Stewart, Terry Frost and Susan, Lynn Wolfe and various MSFC types.

Judith

Hanna is coming to Australia for a short while (solo of course) for her sister's wedding. Luckily, this coincides with the Swan/Natcon so we'll catch up with her there. She will be spending one night in Melbourne before flying on so we'll get to see her here briefly as well. After we sent a long letter to Judith and Joseph, it appears that I'm no longer persona non grata with Joseph after all these years. We don't have any more news about whether they'll be migrating to Australia but we can grill Judith when she gets here.

Lucy is getting sick of political ads on TV now that the elections are upon us. Tim Fisher was doing quite a reasonable job of a policy speech for the Nationals - making them sound like rational and sensible policy-makers (albeit whilst people did things to cows and pigs and wheat in the background - no mistaking where their voters are). Then he dropped the weird bits like legislating so that the flag can't be changed. And, you'd have to support the Libs as well.

I'm

genuinely scared about the possibility of a Coalition Federal government. The Coalition agenda for cutting the Public Service and making it more like their beloved private industry is frightening. The list of sell-offs and cutbacks is lengthy and unnecessary. Terry Frost was celebrating getting an ASO2 position in the CES last Friday, so I showed him a document I just happened to have at the time that shows that the Coalition wants to axe the CES. The CES, apparently, competes unfairly with private industry employment agencies!! Much of "Fightback" and their industrial relations package is blatantly anti-union and anti-protection. They want to axe any agencies that are there to protect workers' rights and then they want to get us

all out of our awards and into cosy little one-on-one employment contracts. As someone has bluntly pointed out: all the cunning employer has to do is seduce their employees with a nice above-award package in the first year (thereby losing the protection of the award) and then screw them mercilessly thereafter. The attitude is that if you won't work at reduced rates, then there are over a million unemployed who will.

This also means that little Johnny Howard wants all of his mates in private industry to be able to apply for Public Service jobs because they're so much better qualified to do them. (I'd hate to tell him that our recent experience in DORS would indicate otherwise.) No closed shops (where?!?) and no enforced unionism in the Public Service (does this mean I'll have to give up using my spiked club to recruit new members?).

I just hope that "Mad Dog" Kennett's Victorian shenanigans and the spectre of a 15% Goods and Services Tax are enough to scare the complacent bastard voters out of voting Liberal. I don't know where all of these Liberal voters are. It's a very brave Victorian who admits that they vote Liberal. All I can say is that there must be a whole shitload of elderly, infirm and insane out there who have a lot to answer for.

That'll

do for the political diatribe for now.

My "union activities" were supposed to cool down a bit this year. Determining Refugee Status is hard work and my frequent meetings and trips to Canberra were seriously interfering with my ability to get cases completed. So, I gave up my position as Chair of our delegates' committee and my position as National Delegate representing DILGEA in Victoria. However, as a DORS delegate, I'm now a member of a different National Committee which meets six times a year and I'm still National Training rep for another three Canberra meetings a year. Add to that some meetings to get "Agency Bargaining" started off in DILGEA and it looks as if I'm back where I was.

(Lucy Sussex wrote the next 4 paragraphs...)

On

the writing front things look good - lots of review work from the *Age* and requests from all sorts of bods to write short fiction for them. I can't remember if I told you this, but on 4 December 1993 (my birthday, and also when I found out that Roger had died) Oxford decided to sell off their children's line and sack the very good editor who had worked with the kid's writers for 11 years. There I was, in Canberra, writing to Geoff to say I'd dedicate my teenage novel to Roger, and unbeknownst to me, its fate was taking a new and nasty turn. The book had been sold to OUP, but not typeset, and because my contract didn't contain a 'contract reassignment clause' I had no way of stopping it being put up for auction in a job lot with the other OUP kid's books. The sale has just taken place, to the highest bidder, for only half of what OUP were expecting to get. Basically the list has gone to a dark horse with not the best record in the juvenile fiction area. If I want out, I have to pay back my advance and take the ms shopping again, possibly to the original OUP editor, who has reportedly just got a good job elsewhere.

Ah the joys of publishing.... Still, I am doing some editing work, which I'll tell you about when things are a bit more certain ie when I have an ironclad little contract in my hand (with contract reassignment clause).

Miss Jane Tisell is putting together a book of reminiscences of Roger, so I bit the bullet and told all about the 'Door for DUFF' campaign. Are you contributing? Bruce Gillespie's piece is 7 pages long and growing.

We have a cat called Tinker, a moggy tabby with markings not unlike a snow leopard's. She came from Paul Voermans' garden in Brunswick, which at the time was infested by about a dozen ferals, including 5 kittens. We took Tinker home at 5 weeks, when she was a tiny little scrap. First night we had her I was lying on the couch and she went to sleep on my neck, head against my earlobe (which she suckled, a weird sensation) and tail on my collarbone. Since then she has grown lean and elegant, and has rather a nice nature. The landlord doesn't know about her, so when he was fixing a few things around the place, either the cat went visiting, or was put in the bedroom with litter and

food. She rarely mews, which is handy.

(And back to Mr Warner...)

Tinker

isn't too destructive - yet. So far she tends to ruck up the rugs in the pantry and hall and occasionally shreds paper. None of the furniture looks shredded so far. She has a voracious appetite and is growing quite quickly. Her strength is quite noticeable and I don't think she realises how hard she bites and scratches when she plays. She's fast enough on her feet that she's quite difficult to catch and she has the natural cat ability to hide in places where you were sure you'd looked. It's a shame we don't have a decent-sized garden for her to play in - she loves the pocket-handkerchief front garden - which is mostly full of bark chips and potato plants. (I think we've discovered the ancient art of mass-producing potatoes. Just take one crappy old weed-infested bark-chip-strewn front garden and add some mouldy inedible potatoes. A couple of months later you find spuds all over the place, and you never quite find all of them so they keep sprouting up again in odd places. Sort of "pleasant surprise" gardening!)

Perry

Middlemiss has got back into the swing of his (almost) regular Wednesday Pub gatherings. There's been quite a large turn-up of his old programmer mates - none of whom sneer at him being unemployed. They seem to be quite a nervous bunch as far as employment goes. There was a large dinner held at the Spice Shop last Saturday - principally because John McPharlin was in town. We were supposed to be dining frugally at Roy and James' place initially - after James had given both Lucy and I haircuts but we dragged Roy and James along to the dinner as well. After dinner we crammed into Perry and Robyn's lounge room in their small but serviceable house in Canterbury St in Richmond. We hope that Robyn gets some legal work soon as they both seem to be feeling the financial pinch. Stop Press (from Lucy) - Perry has a job for 3 months (with the possibility of extension) at Telecom. (Back to Mr Warner..) Perry's job isn't signed and sealed yet but he got it through his friend Roy (who Mark has met at one of the

Wednesday/Friday beer gatherings). ..And we all thought that it would be Robyn who would get a job first.

I can't

remember whether I told you about the Warner/Middlemiss/Ackroyd home wine-bottling or not. Last time that we went through Rutherglen, I noticed that Chambers were selling their "Dry Red" in 25 litre containers at a ridiculously cheap price. So, when we got back to Melbourne, I ordered a container-full and a half bottle of their limited-release liqueur tokay. For some strange reason, Justin just happened to have a large collection of clean, empty wine bottles, so we only had to buy some corks and a gizmo for forcing big, springy, new corks into tight bottlenecks. It took Perry and I less than two hours to wash the bottles and bottle the wine. We got 34 bottles (11 each and one shared by the bottlers) out of it at a price of about \$3.40 a bottle. Now I'm looking at buying wine from other vineyards and doing the same thing. It's not as much fun as crushing grapes with your feet but it's a lot less messy! What's US wine like? Have you discovered the legendary Nichols' \$2-a-bottle Great Red yet?

We went to the "Big Day Out" recently - which was basically an Australian version of the "Lollapalooza" tours. The headliners were Iggy Pop, Sonic Youth, Mudhoney, Helmet, The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds and Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine. Then there were a whole bunch of local bands (Nick Cave is not local these days) like the Fireballs, Spiderbait, Hoss (who are pretty good and whose lead singer/guitarist I was introduced to by Lucy's friend Paul), Horschhead, Mantissa, Soulscrapper, Girl Monstar, the Underground Lovers, Sound Unlimited, the Meanies, the Hard-Ons (featuring Jerry A. - who is usually the lead singer of one of my favourite bands Poison Idea), This is Serious Mum, Weddings Parties Anything, the Cosmic Psychos and lastly the Painters and Dockers. We only got to see about a third of the local bands, and it rained quite a lot, and there were terrible queues for things and we got really tired but it was a lot of fun. It was estimated that there were thirteen thousand people gathered at the Melbourne Showgrounds for the event - which sounded enormous until we learnt that seventy thousand turned out for the Guns and Roses show in worse

weather and conditions at Calder Raceway. Not that I like G'n'R at all but it makes you realise why "alternative" music is still alternative.

End of letter.

RANDOM DIARY ENTRY: 01.05.93

The

people of Australia were suitably scared, thank goodness. The Liberals even complained about the Labor Party's "scare campaign" and how it was all dirty politics. Strangely enough, it was probably the media which did a lot of the damage - and a lot of the media is owned by big chums of the Liberals. Justice has a little poetry to it sometimes. The newspapers ran headlines varying from "Keating Triumphs" to "Hewson Blows It". Amusingly enough, the Sun-Herald in Melbourne (recently the target of a "Is that the truth or did you read it in the Herald-Sun?" campaign) almost ignored the election result and did some nice home'n'family stuff on Mr Hewson. It was as if they were too proud to admit that their beloved masters had been defeated. Jeff Kennett stayed in some foetid bunker for two days before emerging to confront the media to tell them that he wasn't really a factor in the enormous swing toward Labor in Victoria. One can almost visualise him washing his hands and saying "Out, damned Kennett Factor, out!". The Loony Right-Wing columnists in the "Australian" were telling us that the electorate can't have too many brain cells left because they re-elected those awful Labor people again. We were told that the stock markets had little faith in the "new" government. It's strange that "the stock market" doesn't have a vote isn't it?

Still, we can chuckle at the contest for the leadership of the Liberal Party. It's a bit like competing for the captaincy of a recently-torpedoed ship. Hewson wants to go down with the ship but little Johnny "Zero Charisma" Howard would like the honour of being top dog when it happens. Luckily, Senator Bronwyn Bishop - fresh from the Maggie Thatcher breeding tank - has decided to dip out of the race.

I don't like Paul Keating much as a Prime Minister, but he makes John Hewson scowl a lot, and that'll have to do for the moment.

JULIAN'S TOP THIRTY ALBUMS FOR 1992:

The following are my "best buys" of the last year or so. Most of them are recent releases; some are obviously not. Collectively they've kept the CD player and amp warm for some time.

& here

in no particular order they is:

1. "HARDCORE RAGGA 2" (The 2 Friends Dancehall Hits) by Various Artists.

This is the modern, hard, foot-friendly, mercurial reggae. It's fulla hits & fulla stars: Shabba Ranks, Cutty Ranks, Cocoa Tea, Dennis Brown, Judy Mowatt & many others. If you want an intro to the "raggamuffin" sound, then this one is ideal.

2 & 3. "MESSES" (William Byrd) & "THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH" (Thomas Tallis) by the Deller Consort.

It was quite odd to read John Bangsund's glowing report of the Deller Consort's Adelaide Festival performance in 1964 recently (in Bruce Gillespie's "The Metaphysical Review") - seeing as how I had recently become enamoured of ye olde sacred music. The fact that these two CDs are cheap releases on the French Harmonia Mundi label was just icing on the cake. Bill Byrd wrote a pretty good "Mess" and old Tallis made Jeremiah's lamentations sound rather fun in a moaning monastic sort of way. They're both very English blokes and their works are sung by the very English Mr Deller and crew. Just because the Poms didn't have colourful names, it doesn't mean they couldn't write a nice tune.

4. "DANSES ANCIENNES DE HONGRIE ET DE TRANSYLVANIE" (taken from the Victoris Codex, the Kajoni Codex and the Leutschau Virginal Book) by the Clemencic Consort.

Dr Rene Clemencic is not an English bloke, but he and his consort interpret these ancient dances rather finely. I'd always thought that a "consort" was a bit like a courtesan, but this mob just seem to be a sprightly dance band. Though goodness knows what those naughty Hungarians and Transylvanians might have got up to after shaking a leg at Dr Rene's Disco. (Residents fans may note that

"Renaldo & The Loaf" seem to have taken some inspiration from this sort of stuff.)

5. "PABLO AND FRIENDS" by Augustus Pablo.

Mr Pablo is one of the best Dub Reggae producers in Jamaica and plays a mean melodica. (Have you ever tried to make a melodica sound mean? I had a blow through Maureen Gell's once and it just sounded weedy.) This CD contains various singles which were produced by Augustus complete with a dubbed "version" following. The subject matter of the songs varies from the religious to the romantic and from the sexual to the silly ("Mule Train"???) but each is very good reggae. Augustus Pablo is a pretty safe bet for inclusion in any reggae "best of" 'cos he's always one of the best.

6. "ARC-WELD" by Neil Young & Crazy Horse.

A nice

man at Au-Go-Go records gave me such a sales spiel about this one that I bought it. My early impressions of Neil Young from his radio singles were not good, so this was the first of his albums that I bought. This could have been entitled "The Compleat Live Heavy Crunching Neil Young" as it showcases the stuff that makes him the "Godfather of Grunge". Perhaps I was also tempted by the story that "Arc", the third CD in the box, was supposedly created at the suggestion of Sonic Youth (who supported Young on the tour in question). They apparently said that he should do something totally outrageous for his next album - so he spliced together all of the bits of feedback, drum rolls, song endings and other ephemera from his tapes and made this odd collage. It's the sort of thing that you could play for light relief after listening to Lou Reed's "Metal Machine Music". Hey - I like it.

7. "BONE MACHINE" by Tom Waits.

This is Tom back to the sort of form that he established with "Swordfishtrombones" and "Rain Dogs". Weird, strung-out bluesy songs with hooks and barbs. OK - so he sounds like he's being strangled half the time, but if you loved him gargling whisky & gravel, why should you complain now? If Tom moves in to the house next-door, then life need never be dull again.

8. "8-WAY SANTA" by Tad.

Tad

is Tad Doyle and Tad is also the name of the band he's in. Maybe I bought this because Wayne - the guitarist in Brokenhead, a local Melbourne band - is a fan of them and had a Tad sticker on his guitar. Maybe. Anyway, now I'm a fan too. Tad is a big boy with a big guitar sound and some suitably heavy accompaniment. This is more grunge than metal and it's on the Sub-Pop label so it must be err... okay. Well, actually it's bloody good.

9. "BADMOTORFINGER" by Soundgarden.

More Monster Wombo Rock from relatively normal-sized guys. Critics say that these boys are too reminiscent of the dinosaurs of the '70s, but fans like me know that they are like 'em but better. They write good songs and they cover some esoteric stuff when they play live - Spinal Tap's "Big Bottom" and Cheech & Chong's "Earache My Eye"!! For the friendly neighbourhood headbanger in your family.

10. "DIRTY" by Sonic Youth.

They're minor gods of noise in the U.S. and they're pretty popular in this particular household. Another solid effort from the "Concerned Parents of Grunge". ...and if you lift out the plastic tray underneath the CD, you get to see the photograph of a naked man and woman doing something with some stuffed toys. (And they got all excited in Queensland about this?) If you must fuck with a glove puppet, you might as well listen to this at the same time.

11. "BEERS, STEERS + QUEERS" by The Revolting Cocks.

Al Jourgenson has been a member of more bands than you can poke a sharp stick at. Ministry is the band that everyone is pointing their sharp sticks at right now but RevCo are their slightly more danceable precursors. I thought there was a fault in my speakers, but the bastards had purposely put a distorted drum sound on the title track. Imagine electronic dance music played by a heavy metal band and you've got a vague idea of what this is like. Let's just say that they massacre Olivia

Newton-John's "(Let's Get) Physical". Great comedy intro too.

12. "BLOODSUGARSEXMAGIK" by the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

So every Metal band these days does some number with a bit of funky slap-bass - even to the point where "black persons" are allowed to form Metal bands. During the sixties and seventies, "funky" was a swear word in HM bands. A bass player could get sacked for going

"bunk boink"

instead of "dum dum dum" in those days.

The RHCPs are the original and the best in the genre and "B.S.S.M." is their best album so far. I thought their last album, "Mother's Milk" was great too, but some other meathead reviewers disagree. Avoid their cutesy-poo interviews and video bits and just rock out. You can dance if you want to.

13. "POSSESSION" by God.

I've got to the point where I'm immediately suspicious of any band that has "God" or "Jesus" as part of their name. It has become a decidedly passe affection to do such a "twuly outwageous" thing. No need for suspicion here however - this is primo "Punk Jazz". The best sort of description for this sort of stuff is "Ornette Coleman meets Napalm Death at the OK Corral". Thrash Metal with honking, squalling, bleating saxophones. John Zorn must be the Godfather of Punk Jazz because he seems to be connected with most of the groups that I would lump under that label. In this case he produces and adds the occasional honk, squall & bleat.

Music to alarm your cat and frighten your dentist. I like it.

14. "WHOSE FIST IS THIS ANYWAY?" by Prong.

Clint Ruin/Jim Thirlwell was a one-man industry for a while, giving himself ever more repulsive band names and releasing records that sound like a diary of self-destruction. Nowadays he does production jobs for other bands and adds his own percussion-heavy signature to other people's wares. Prong's "Prove You Wrong" album was pretty good in the first place, but Clint/Jim has taken a few of the songs and made them sharper, tighter, heavier or gloomier as the occasion demands. There are some

blurbs about Prong on the cover: Ice-T says "Prong - As dope as it gets" (that's a compliment, honkies) and Clint/Jim himself describes them as "Orgasmaticians of blood, blister, raunch and pummel." Nuff said.

15. "AS RAW AS EVER" by Shabba Ranks.

Shabba

was the ragga toaster on Scritti Politti's "She's a Woman" - which is where I heard him first. He's had heaps of hits (in ragga terms), he's triffically popular and all the evidence you need is on this CD. My favourite is the duet with Maxi Priest on "Housecall". If you start to get bored with reggae - this is where to go next.

16. "I'M REALLY FUCKED NOW" by Prisonshake.

I'm not even sure what made me buy this. I don't think that the band chose a particularly good name and very few people seem to have ever heard of them. The cover says: "File under - Total Ass-Kick" and in a way they're right. They sound like a very professional garage band who enjoy what they do. Sounds simple? Not so. Getting the "shambolic" rock sound is like rainbow-chasing: if you try too hard it sounds like shit and if you're just incompetent, then that becomes obvious too. Prisonshake do it effortlessly and with a smile. I can think of several Australian bands who might have sounded this good if they hadn't got the wrong idea of what "professional" means. It just happens that Prisonshake are Americans. That won't stop me from listening.

17. "BLANK BLACKOUT VACANT" by Poison Idea.

If you want to write your thesis on "'Heaviness' in Rock Music as a Function of the Physical Size of Band Members", then these are your guinea pigs to study. I mentioned Tad Doyle before as a beefy lad. Poison Idea would be about four Tads. Guitarist Pig Champion would comprise about two Tads on his own. Their sound is concomitant with their size. These are the Gods of Monster Wombo Rock. They called themselves the "Kings of Punk" but now they've gone up the scale. This is quality by the kilogram.

18 & 19. "GUTS OF A VIRGIN" and "BURIED SECRETS" by Painkiller.

More Punk Jazz.

This is John Zorn's own group in these two cases. Don't be put off by the autopsy photo covers (which seems to be *de rigueur* for death metal bands these days). This is largely sax, bass and drums - which used to be termed "the classic jazz trio". In Painkiller's case, they came not to worship jazz, but to crank it up to 10 and thrash the hell out of it. Your cat will go AWOL and your dentist will take up flower-arranging.

20. "THIS IS NOT THE WAY HOME" by The Cruel Sea.

At last! An Australian band. A band I can feel proud to live near. Best Australian band in the World! They used to be a good rock instrumentals band and then Tex Perkins from the Beasts of Bourbon joined them and they got even better. They do excellent covers of good taste stuff like Captain Beefheart and Link Wray and their own songs are equally good. By some audio miracle, they have achieved the best production I have ever heard on an Australian album (expensive studios do not necessarily a good record make). Buy one for yourself and one for a friend!

21. "DIM STARS" by the Dim Stars.

The sort of albums where a young band get together with one of their idols and muck around together are usually a pile of back-slapping, in-joking, tedious poo. Not so in this case. The perpetrators are two members of Sonic Youth, a member of Gumball and Elder God of Punk, Richard Hell. Sometimes they sound like Richard Hell never fell asleep and sometimes they sound like a good, grunge-y blues band. Mostly they sound good. It's a pleasure when you fear the self-indulgent worst and get a nutritious cookie like this.

22. "FRACTAL ZOOM" by Brian Eno.

This is a "single" from his "Nerve Net" CD. Ironically, the "single" is longer than the "album" (and both are over an hour long!). You get eleven mixes of what is the best song on the album and a sort-of "b-side". Whilst I might question the marketing exercise that brought about this epic eccentricity, there is no questioning that Eno still

can deliver the goods. The "Wrong Way Up" collaboration with John Cale was a bit lukewarm. This is a re-instatement of his powers.

23. "STEADY DIET OF NOTHING" by Fugazi.

The sparseness and tension in this band's performances made me think occasionally of the Gang of Four (the band - not the Canadian Fanzine publishers or the Chinese Revisionists). If US Hardcore Punk was supposed to become strong, sensible and ideologically sound, then it became Fugazi. They're the keepers of that flame and have become a Prometheus to younger bands in turn. They're classic but not old.

24. "DRY" by P J Harvey.

At last! A woman! Polly Harvey could be the new Patti Smith but she's more user-friendly and more up-to-date. Patti read poetry and squawked on a clarinet. Polly plays both guitar and violin very well. Her bowing and scraping is worthy of John Cale's best in the Velvet Underground. She's not a rock bimbo, or a grunge whore, or coy and dippy like Tori Amos. More urban blues for the 1990s and her video clips are worth watching too. Her second album is keenly awaited.

25. "SLANTED AND ENCHANTED" by Pavement.

The little sticker on the CD case in Au-Go-Go said that they sounded a bit like the Velvet Underground, a bit like the Fall and a bit like Sonic Youth. This could mean that Pavement were a disastrous copy band or that they could be interesting. Luckily, they are very interesting. There are definite bits that sound like wholesale theft from Lou Reed or Mark E. Smith, but they do have a sound of their own and a wayward way with lyrics - some of which have a touch of Don Van Vliet to them ("Lies and betrayals... /Fruit-covered nails... /Eccentricity"). They're new, they're different and they're worth the money.

26. "MARCUS GARVEY/GARVEY'S GHOST" by Burning Spear.

The first time I heard the "Garvey's Ghost" album was at Dave and Jenny Arntzen's house. Sometimes we played records in their "lounge" after the folk club Jenny held (and still holds) on Sunday nights and occasionally I'd rifle through their record collection when I house-sat for them. Dave is not a reggae fan at all but there was something about

"Garvey's Ghost" that he liked. I recognised it instantly as very good dub and determined to get a copy at some time in the future. Last year I discovered that Virgin, through their Mango label, had re-released both "Garvey's Ghost" and the original vocal album "Marcus Garvey" on the same CD. The re-release was timed to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Marcus Garvey's birth. If you don't know who he was, read some black history. Musically, this CD gets my vote as one of the best reggae albums ever. The singing is sweet, the lyrics are heartfelt and the dubs are inspired. Certified ideological sounds.

27. "MEANTIME" by Helmet.

The title track to this album made its way onto the CD jukebox at "The Tote". Helmet may not know that to be featured on a jukebox in a grimy pub in Collingwood in inner-suburban Melbourne is an accolade, but in local terms, that's pretty good. More hard, punk-inspired Monster Wombo Rock. Their songs are characterised by very choppy guitar and very clipped bass and drums and short, sharp vocals. Very few guitar solos and plenty of energy. It was pleasing to see that they could play the songs well live at the "Big Day Out" when they came to Melbourne.

Pop for grungeheads?

28. "LUST" by the Lords of Acid.

I suppose Jason Holmes is mostly to blame for introducing me to Belgian NewBeat. It goes by other names as well and there are variants on the theme but if you go into a record shop and ask for some they'll either tell you to piss off or say (thinking: "he doesn't look like one of them"): "Err.. they're over there if you must know". Belgian NewBeat is almost exclusively electronic dance music with odd samples and breathy voices. The words are sung in English but with Belgian accents. The lyrics seem to be largely pre-occupied with sex in some shape or form, although not without some sense of humour. One of my favourite pieces is entitled B.C.L.D. - short for "Big Car, Little Dick" - which is the chorus of the song. The "Lust" album is typical of the genre but stands out by being performed and produced by the kingpins of the NewBeat scene. If Kraftwerk took Ecstasy whilst recording the soundtrack for "Carry On Bonking" then you might get roughly the same result as this. Hardcore devotees of the Lords of Acid should seek out the single (eight different mixes!) of "I Must Increase My Bust". It should

have been dedicated to Barbara Windsor.

29. "PSALM 69" by Ministry.

After Nirvana's "Nevermind", this would have to be the biggest recent alternative "hit" album. Some weed in "Vox" magazine wrote that Ministry were just pushing old Chuck Berry riffs through a monstrous machine. That could only be said to be true of "Jesus Built My Hotrod", one of the singles off the album, and if so, then it is done in a joyous, speeding, maniacal fashion. Gibby of the Butthole Surfers as guest vocalist goes totally ga-ga on "Jesus..." and there's a great video clip that goes along with the song. The whole album is full of manic energy, even when it's being slow and brooding about it. George Bush rabbits on about a "New World Order" and in the recent single version of "Just One Fix" you hear Mr William S. Burroughs ramble on in his usual entertaining manner. Ministry's earlier stuff was good but it was never quite this focussed. Just occasionally, a few thousand CD buyers aren't wrong.

30. "PIECE OF CAKE" by Mudhoney.

If Mudhoney did a cover version of "Mary Had A Little Lamb" I'd still buy it. These guys can do no wrong. Every album is a grunge masterpiece. They may have graduated from the Sub-Pop label to Reprise to be cogs in the Time-Warner MegaCorp, but the sound is basically unchanged. They've added a few more instruments but there's very little unnecessary chrome on this four-wheel-drive formula.

Ugly

but loveable.

31. "FRAGMENTS OF A RAINY SEASON" by John Cale.

This album is particularly special because it is almost identical to the concert he performed in Melbourne a couple of months ago. If you were cynical, you could call it "John Cale plays his least unpopular songs live on solo piano". You couldn't call them greatest hits because he's never had a hit. He does, however have a large, devoted following who appreciate his two and a half decades of music. The performances are very good and faithfully reproduced - which means the occasional mistake as

well as highlights. In concert, and on this CD, Cale appears to be enjoying himself: whether playing straight rock'n'roll or his more classically-influenced pieces. His voice is in fine form too - none of the fading powers that dog other old rock warhorses. The CD is both retrospective and current as it spans his whole career but it places everything in the context in which it is performed now. Essential for the Cale fan.

Since I wrote my "Top Thirty or So", I've bought many more CDs which I have become very fond of. However, I'll leave those to next issue.

SWANCON 18 REPORT:

The last two Swancons have seemed to merge in my memory and if we hadn't produced the ConReports appearing previously this, then I'd have no idea what happened at which Con.

This time around, we planned things a little better. We'd reserved more time for doing touristy things, as we had little or no time to be tourists last time. This did mean that we had to cram the catching-up-with-old-friends bit into a short space of time, but we used our time more effectively.

We stayed with Pip Maddern in Bayswater - just walking distance (but over the river) from the Con Hotel. Pip made our stay trouble-free and was a very friendly host. During the convention itself, the committee had been kind enough to provide us with a room, so we had less of the troublesome toing and froing that otherwise occurs. (Although an initial mix-up sent us on a fruitless mission to one of the overflow hotels *sigh*.)

I'd forgotten

that Perth shops still have fairly restricted opening hours and hence the city was pretty quiet on a Saturday afternoon. We chanced upon the Hothouse Flowers doing a free open-air gig in Forrest Place. I've never been a great fan of theirs anyway but they were doing a cringingly bad "we sympathise with the aborigines because we're Irish and we've always had to struggle" spiel. We left after that.

The following Sunday we ventured down to Fremantle - which never fails to amuse in some way. We looked around the markets, signed an anti-duck-shooting petition and ate lunch at the Sail & Anchor, which is one of WA's best pubs. Although they don't experiment as much as they

used to, they still brew their own very good beer. The food upstairs was rather good too. In the afternoon, I hied myself off to the Lockett/Beasley household to indulge in one of my favourite pastimes - Rail Baron. Ian Nichols, Sally Beasley, Dave Lockett, Ian "Eddie-Baby" Edwards and I swore at each other most pleasantly for a couple of hours or so. Meanwhile, Lucy had dinner with Pip - who had to zip off to mark essays - poor thing.

On Monday the shops were actually open so I returned to my old haunts - Dada Records and 78 Records to spend several hours browsing. I bought two more blues harps to add to the collection and some cheap (and as I discovered later - nasty) guitar strings for Lucy's pseudo-lute. (Perhaps we could call it the Lutene Guitar because of the disaster when it sounds?) There was a long-sleeved Fat Freddy's Cat T-shirt in "Joynt Venture". I wish I'd bought it now. Off to chateau Lockett/Beasley for dinner. Their place had been nicknamed "The Bunker" due to its concrete construction and grim visage - and with passing reference to Dave's wargaming activities. Sally and Dave will be happy to see the bulldozers drive over "The Bunker" soon, but that's another story.

On Tuesday,

Grant Stone recorded an interview with Lucy for transmission on "The Faster Than Light Radio Show" which he still runs, bless him. The studios were at Murdoch University, where Grant works, so we had lunch there. A conversation with Grant always seems to be very interesting and very rushed because he has to be somewhere else. I get the feeling of trying to squeeze in extra words as the car window winds up before he drives away.

That evening we had dinner in an old Vietnamese restaurant in Victoria Park that I remember back from when I used to live in Perth. We ate with my dear old friend Bernadette and her son David. Bernadette and David were good enough to put up with me for a week in October last year as well when I had a business trip to Perth. (I now have a lot of respect for parents who are woken at 5.00am by their bouncing two year-olds!)

Lucy had never travelled down the stretch of the Swan River from Perth to Fremantle so, on Tuesday, we took in a river cruise in the morning. In the afternoon, we visited the large bird sanctuary

which is only a casual stroll away from Pip's place. Mostly it looks like a small lake with a lot of dead trees in it but there was a surprising variety of birds - enough to keep Judith Hanna interested for a while.

The "pre-convention" event was a dinner held at the El Gringo Mexican Restaurant in Subiaco. The food and service were decidedly mediocre but all of the guests were good-natured about it all. For many of the committee, it was their first chance to rub shoulders (or other bodily parts) with the guests. Terry Pratchett and wife Lyn weren't there but Nick Stathopoulos, Lucy and Paul Kidd were. I just happened to be there too.

As an aside,

I have found very few really good Mexican Restaurants in Australia. The places just seem to breed mediocrity. When it was part of my job to visit restaurants (to see whether they could justify importing chefs & waiting staff from overseas) I was not impressed by kitchens and cooking methods either. There was one place where they simply "assembled" the meals and microwaved them. They had a tottering bank of microwave ovens for the purpose.

The best Mexican Restaurant I ever went to only lasted for a year or so in Perth. It was called Los Gallos and was the only one which rose above the ruck by offering dishes which were different and delicious. The Mexicali Rose, in Richmond, used to serve a Mexican "Chocolate Turkey" but it didn't have chocolate in it and the customers apparently thought the turkey was too dry - so they used chicken. It was a bit dull after that.

I now expect an avalanche of letters from people in the U.S. telling me about wondrous Mexican and Tex-Mex Restaurants they have nearby. This will only make me more bitter and twisted.

On Thursday we walked from Pip's place, over the bridge across the Swan to the Convention. The Concom had been kind enough to provide us with a room at the Conhotel - so no commuting at strange hours this time - which was a blessed relief. However, we were first erroneously sent off to the overflow hotel which was a respectable walk away from the real hotel. We chanced upon Eric B. Lindsay and Jean Weber, who had managed to sort out their accommodation. Of course, the people at the overflow had never heard of us and we traipsed back to the real hotel - where we were booked in after all.

We relaxed with a beer each at one of the wooden tables in the open air adjoining the lounge bar. This bloke in a hat with a notebook computer asked if we minded if he joined us. We said no and he introduced himself as Terry Pratchett. We chatted idly and pleasantly about all sorts of things which I forget now. Later I sauntered off to seek old workmates for drinks in West Perth. All of my crusty old drinking chums had wandered off early for the long weekend, so I made do with a chat with the few people who were left. Like a lot of Cons I've been to lately, this, being the first night, was the "nothing much doing" night of the Con. We went to a particularly unexceptional Chinese restaurant for dinner. I tell a lie. It was notable for the "MSG is good for you!" propaganda on the front counter. We went to bed. We suffered from eating MSG.

That evening, Pip had flown to Melbourne. She took her cat, Katerina, with her. This may be unusual for a short stay in another city, but apparently cats travel quite cheaply and it was easier to look after Katarina in Melbourne than it was to go through the trauma and expense of a cattery in Perth. So Pip says.

I guess that Friday must have been pretty unexceptional too because our notes for the day say simply: "Robert Jordan - met him and his wife and his publicist & got to chat to Grant a bit." Mr Jordan is a cross between a Southern Gentleman and a bookwriting behemoth. He's an enormous man who supports himself with a walking stick. I guess that's related to the Purple Heart he has. He writes enormous books too but I don't suppose I need to tell people that. Look for the groaning shelves at any airport newsagency. He distinguished himself by espousing right-wing views and talking about his love of hunting. Roman Orszanski didn't like him at all but then not many people did. Jordan was primarily in Australia on a promotional tour and the Con was incidental to this.

His wife,

Harriet McDougall, was a different person entirely. She is an editor for Tor but was not keen to make this fact public for fear of being besieged by "budding authors". She was rather personable and we talked to her in preference to her husband.

The meeting was occasioned by Harriet having

bought one of Lucy's books and wanting her to sign it. We joined her and talked and were shortly joined by Grant Stone and Robert. Grant had been interviewing Robert for his "Faster Than Light Radio Show". This allowed us to have one of our few snatched chats with Grant and allowed me to meet Gabrielle - a publicist from Penguin. I thought she was rather attractive and Lucy never fails to remind me of this whenever she pops up. Gabrielle lives in Melbourne and recently had the job of being "minder" for Sarah Paretsky whilst she was here. She told us some amusing tales from the world of the "P.R. Ladies" (they are almost exclusively women) and horror stories of the beastly authors whom they "mind".

Saturday was just the usual hanging around at panel items until dinner time. (Did I mention that the food at the hotel at lunch-time was particularly unexceptional? As Dave Lockett says: "It was cheap".) Julia Bateman, bless her chubby little cheeks, organised a dinner at a Chinese Food-Hall in Northbridge, so a group of us including Julia, husband Craig Hilton, son Steven, Nick Stathopoulos, Jonathan Strahan, Roman Orszanski (and most likely someone I've forgotten) trekked off in various vehicles for Somewhere More Exciting. The food was good and cheap and plentiful. Nick and Roman were in an entertaining mood and there was lots to see just parading up and down the streets. We promenaded down to an Italian coffee'n'cake shop for dessert and returned to the Con for the dreaded Masquerade. Nick was M.C. for the Masquerade and was appropriately (??!!) clad as an overstuffed, Arabic bazaar con-man cum ringmaster. As usual, there was a decidedly strong demarcation between the carefully-thought-out costumes, the spur-of-the-moment ones and the utterly pathetic ones. Terry Pratchett's daughter Rhianna paraded in a decidedly father-worrying costume alongside a young local gent whom she had taken a shine to. Paul Kidd worried one and all with his enormously-busted, obviously female Platypus costume. The bondage whips didn't help either. Later, he assured us that "she" had particularly realistic breasts and that he'd had an "interesting" time trying to buy lingerie for "her". Luckily "she" was reasonably clad during the Masquerade.

The Platypus

later "posed" girlie-stylee on Steven's motorbike and doubled for the Easter Bunny the next day. Paul claimed that he and a guy in the U.S. were co-

writing a comic entitled "Lesbian Foxes in HoverTanks". I only half-believed him. Months later, I now possess a copy of "Tank Vixens". Ideologically sound it is not.

Our room was a temporary haven from the vicissitudes of the Con, but not an inviolate one. At one stage, when Lucy had gotten quite upset about something, I was calming her down in our room when we were interrupted by a (nameless!) person who rang to get me to come back to umpire a Rail Baron game. I was not amused at the time. I won't tell you who the unnamed person was as it would only confirm what people already think about her.

I slept through the Easter Egg hunt - as usual - and I might as well have slept through a lot of the day as I don't remember much about it. They did present the Ditmar awards that day with all of the usual grumbling and mumbling. The highlight of the day was going to Prickles Cafe in Fremantle - which was run by friends of Julia's. This was a true Ranquet in the sense that the so-called "banquet" back at the Con was simply a pizza pig-out with heaps of ordering complications. As well as Craig, Julia, Stephen and Nick from last night, we also had Dick and Leah Smith, Terry Pratchett sans family, Don and Anne Griffiths and Ian Gunn and Karen Pender-Gunn.

Prickles specialise in Australian ingredients, so Terry ordered the witchetty grubs and insisted that everyone else had to have a bit as well (less for him to eat!). The rest of us tucked into foods made from emu, crocodile, kangaroo, bunya nuts, wattle seeds and other such native delicacies.

I'm not sure but I think this might have been the major room-partying night where Dick & Leah hosted a fairly long room party which eventually wandered over to Craig & Julia's room. This was probably also the night where Roman exercised his vicious streak by attacking a watermelon with a large knife. There was a rumour that he'd mistaken the watermelon for Robert Jordan.

[Lucy writes....] On Monday, after vacillating whether to do a reading or not, I finally took the plunge...into the Cambrian sea, to be exact, background to my Ditmar-nominated 'The Lottery'.

Reading

is not for every writer - Dave Lockett read Robert Jordan's work for him at the convention, for

instance. Nor is it to every reader's taste. The lack of visuals can be offputting, as well as authors who turn out to have no thespian abilities whatsoever, or who speak in dull monotones. I have read about 20 times to various audiences, ranging from poets to feminists to first year English students, so I'm experienced, if not an old hand. Part of the visual problem of reading was solved by a pair of very small black stockings printed with spaceships, comets and planets. But, so that the audience had something to stare at other than my legs, Nick Stathopoulos was roped in for some on-the-spot illustration. Paul Kidd had demurred, probably because I wouldn't let him put norks on all the fossils in the story. Nick had no such qualms. Give him a whiteboard, and he would draw.

There being no time to rehearse, Nick had really to rise to the occasion, as he had no idea of the content of 'The Lottery', fossils apart, nor what would happen in the 2000 word story. Not having read Stephen Jay Gould's *Wonderful Life* either, the inspiration for the story, he had no idea of what the specific fossils mentioned looked like. Trilobites he had encountered before, so he could manage Marella, described as a cross between a trilobite and a lace doily, but Opabinia? I read out the description slowly, as Nick waited, pen in hand. He gave me a very dirty look when he realised he had to draw a vacuum cleaner with fangs, but visualised it beautifully. The performance was hampered by the lack of a microphone, as I spoke softly, and moreover had to keep turning away from the audience to see how Nick was going. Thus those at the back could barely hear, although they enjoyed the pictures.

[Back to Mr W] During one of the quieter moments of the day, Terry Pratchett asked to be inculcated into the mysteries of Rail Baron. He played with Sally Beasley, Dave Luckett and I. He seemed to pick up some of the finer points of the game very quickly. He asked things like, "If I do this and this then Sally won't be able to do this will she?", thereby indicating a fiendish strategem, which if he were not a guest of honour, would have earned him

Sally's lifelong enmity.

We could only chuckle and say "yes" and Sally could only politely steam.

We went back to the same food-hall in Northbridge for dinner again and then returned to the hotel for the Dead Dog Party. I don't remember it as being an exceptional party but it was good enough that no-one wanted to go home early. We eventually got

evicted from the room we were in for making too much noise and then continued to play a hide-and-seek game with the management as we tried to find a settling place for the party. When we ran out of hiding places and the management had switched off all of the lights in the hotel it was time to go home.

We went back to a more normal life at Pip's place.

On Tuesday, I went in to our Department's Perth office as I thought they messed up my pay. They hadn't but they had neglected to give me warning that I had made some wrong assumptions about my pay. That evening we went to Steve Gunnell and Maureen Gell's place to meet up with Leigh Edmonds, Valma Brown and Judith Hanna. Judith was in Australia during the Convention but had family business to attend to over the weekend. Hence we were making good by having dinner - at "La Rive Gauche", which was a reasonable French restaurant in South Perth. We chatted long and hard, interrupted only by some misunderstanding over Leigh's order.

We picked up a hire-car on Wednesday and decided to drive up to the Canning Dam so that Lucy could get used to the car. On the way, we dropped in on Ian Nicholls in his "cottage" by the railway. In Melbourne, the real estate agents would describe his place as having "great renovation potential". With Ian resident, I'm not sure what potential the place will achieve. He couldn't have been there for too long because there was space to sit down.

At the dam, we were fortunate to see a few very large kangaroos - large enough to make you wary of them - and a long-necked turtle, totally oblivious to the rest of the world, swimming happily in the pool below the face of the dam.

In the evening, we had dinner with Pip, Anne-Marie Allen and Jenny Arntzen at a food-hall in Victoria Park. We went back to Jenny's flat afterwards (although Pip had to go home) where Jenny showed us her exquisite hand-crafted guitars (quick plug for Scott Wise - luthier) and then insisted that she, Anne-Marie and I should sing some of the old songs that we used to perform as a trio. Folksongs. Lucy looked quite shocked at the fact that I was singing such traditional folk material (she puts up with all of my other musical taste). All things considered, we didn't sound too bad - but I don't think we're going to get any bookings.

On Thursday, we got up early and drove up to New Norcia in the hire-car. I'd been through New Norcia at high speed several times before, but I'd never stopped to see the sights. The whole town

was founded by Benedictine monks who used it as the centre for a combination mission and farm which spread over thousands of hectares. They were there supposedly to minister to the Aborigines - which you would assume would cause them to prosper and multiply. They utterly failed on that assumption.

New Norcia

is now largely a ghost town: a handful of monks are left, the school is closed down, the grandiose hotel survives on the tourist trade and Aborigines are conspicuously absent. That said, the town is interesting from a historical perspective. They still run the original flour mill that was installed in the town in the 1800s and the whole place is a living museum. There is an art gallery which used to house some valuable religious works until they were stolen. The stolen works were largely recovered but were ruined by the thieves.

The remaining "art" in the gallery is unfortunately of a much lower quality than that which was stolen.

The lack of Aborigines in the area is part of a much larger story about Australia's colonisation and our awful treatment of this country's aboriginal peoples. The depopulation of New Norcia is also related to its eventual failure as a farming area - due to salination of the soil, caused by ignorance of the subtle relationship between the land, the weather and the native flora and fauna. These days, it's a dry, dusty place where there is very little evidence of the thriving farmlands that once existed. All that still seems to grow is the old olive trees, alongside the native eucalypts. Hundreds of what I used to call "pigmelons" when I was young - bitter, native melons - littered fields which seemed bereft of water.

Stringy sheep

grazed on crew-cut grass stubble amongst the ruins of New Norcia.

In a way, New Norcia can be seen as a microcosm of what went wrong in country Australia, and as such it deserves to survive as a reminder of our past failings.

We didn't get to a single vineyard during the time we were in Perth. We passed a few in the Swan valley on our way back from New Norcia, but it was too late in the day and they were all closed. A project for one of our future Perth trips will have to be a comprehensive tour of the Margaret River and

Frankland River regions to see the countryside and the vineyards. Even the parochial wine critics in the East are sitting up and taking notice of the quality of the red wines - particularly of the Cabernet Sauvignon and the Shiraz - of those regions. We stopped briefly at Pip's and then made our way down to my sister Yvette's place in South Lake via South Perth to see my old friend Roselyn Lacy. Coincidentally, the weekend after our visit, Roz met the man who she was talking of marrying last time I spoke to her.

At Yvette's we were fed with vast amounts of crayfish - or rock lobster as it is known for the export market. Normally it's expensive, but Yvette's husband John is able to get them very cheaply. Lucy was quite tired and slept for a bit whilst we talked about relatives and then John and I played with his computer. If Lucy hadn't awoken we might have crashed there overnight but we made it home to Pip's.

Friday was our day for packing up and getting back to Melbourne. However, we couldn't just flop once we got home. Judith had already made it to Melbourne and we had been invited to dinner at a Vietnamese restaurant in Richmond that night. After arriving home from the airport, we only stopped long enough to drop our bags before going to dinner. Vietnamese food in Richmond is nearly always good and plentiful and cheap. Tonight was no exception. The gathering was full of Old Melbourne fadom: Carey and Jo Handfield, Robyn Mills and Perry Middlemiss, Justin Ackroyd and Jenny Chudecki, Marc and Cath Ortlieb (and us!) as well as Judith. We took Judith home so that she could get a reasonable sleep before the long trip home to England. Despite the little we had seen of her during her stay, it felt as if we were saying goodbye to an old friend.

Once Judith had gone it was back to normal....

FANZINES RECEIVED:

Many people were good enough to send us their fanzines and should receive due credit. OK - so some of them didn't quite cut the mustard but the bulk of them were absorbing reading (as opposed to *absorbent*). Some are zines that we bought individually or by subscription. As this is mostly a "thanks for sending the zine", I haven't included addresses and full publication details. If you can't find out more about these zines elsewhere, write to me and I'll see what information I can dig out for you.

We got:

(In no particular order of merit or receipt)

A Very Occasional Paper (*Sue Peukert*) - small and fun.

doxa! (*Roman Orszanski*) - ditto but not ditto.

The Society of Editors Newsletter (*Ed. John Bangsund*) Not strictly a fanzine, but because "Bangers" edits it - it's almost worth joining the SoE to get it.

The Instrumentality (??) The official journal of the Australian Science Fiction Foundation.

Ansible (*Dave Langford*) Highly recommended British gossipzine. Distributed in Australia with Thyme (q.v.).

brg (*Bruce Gillespie*) Written for ANZAPA, but sometimes available to outsiders.

ANZAPA (*Official Bloody Ed. Alan Stewart*) A natterly APA which now boasts a waiting list.

Woozy (*Ed. Iain McIntyre*) An "anti-profit" zine which features primarily music, comics and home-spun anarchist polemic. Comes complete with a cassette of music by bands from Melbourne and elsewhere.

Get Stuffed! (*Jocko, Jacob Blake et al*) Much more sensible than usual, but then it's the last issue.

Craig Hilton's Swancon 18 Convention Report (*Would you believe it's by Craig Hilton?*) A cartooned conreport with everyone anthropomorphised into cute (??), furry animals. The challenge is for those who were there to work out which animal they have been transformed into. Still fun for non-attendees.

The Wollongong Pig-Breeders Gazette (*Perry Middlemiss & Molto Vino*) Another ANZAPA zine which Perry gives to people he likes.

Thyme - The Australian SF News Magazine (*Ed. Alan Stewart*) Currently Australia's best newszine/genzine. Often incorporates Australian SF News, a book review zine and very occasionally incorporates

Ian Gunn's Artychoke, another one of his cartoon'n'chaos collections.

Ethel The Aardvark (*Ed. Paul Ewins*) A clubzine for the Melbourne Science Fiction club, but also a fairly good newszine as well.

Vapourware (*Greg Hills*) One of Greg's rare zines. May get bigger and better now he's relatively richer.

SF COMMENTARY (*Bruce Gillespie*) A world-class Big Serious Fanzine with room for fun as well. Essential.

Pink (*Karen Pender-Gunn*) A personal zine that combines hard science/SF stuff with the soft and cuddly.

Sonic Death (*Ed. ??*) The official Sonic Youth Fan Club zine. Either you know or you don't.

DUFFacto (*Eds. Dick & Leah Smith*) Tells you all you need to know about the Down Under Fan Fund. Vote Soon! Vote Often! Vote for us! Etc.

FTT (*Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas*) Has many different titles but acronymously consistent. Well-written and well-argued articles about gardening, travel and politics and a lively letter column.

Weber Woman's Wrevenge (*Jean Weber*) A natterly personal zine where BNFs just pop in to say hello.

Doxy (*John Foyster & Various Informers*) Totally unrelated to doxa! (*Shurely shome mishtake here? - Ed.*) Australia's most evil fannish gossip rag since the silencing of Jack Herman Inc. May also be headed for quiet times.

The Ever So Slightly Unusual DINOSAUR Colouring Book (*Ed. Karen Pender-Gunn*) It's exactly what it says. Don't colour over the lines.

Zugzwang (*Kim Huett*) Produced for the SAPS apa and distributed at whim. Used to be Preferred Lies.

The Australian Fan Compendium (*Marc Ortlieb*) Currently only in draft form. It hopes to be a definitive guide to past and present Australian Conventions and clubs. Marc was also muttering about a listing of Australian fanzines as well. If you think you may know something that Marc doesn't - drop him a line at P.O. Box 215, Forrest Hill, VIC 3131 Australia or E-mail:

maor@ausom.oz.au.

Vivisect (Ed SteveH) A fanzine for those who know what is meant by: "Industrial, Dance-Industrial, Techno, Noise, Experimental, Cyberpunk, Electronic Body Music and Nu-Beat". (...and er, the title is ironic).

STET (Dick & Leah Smith) A monster wombo genzine from ~~monster-wombo~~ very nice folks. The lettercol is of the "Who's Who of BNFs" variety.

Trapdoor (Robert Lichtman) Smaller in size but not in stature compared to STET. More Who's Who in the lettercol.

Wild Shaarkah (Eva Hauser) Perzine with an Australian tour diary from her GUFF trip.

Gegenschein (Eric B. Lindsay) I used to say mildly rude things about Geg being a bit dry, but Eric's such a loveable guy you have to be nice to him (or otherwise you'll be fafiated by the Melbourne SMOF conspiracy Inc.).

Philosophical Gas (John Bangsund) Produced for FAPA and "a small triangle of friends". If you have a pointy head, perhaps John will send you a copy.

Wing Window (John D. Berry) A "letter substitute" perzine. Good stuff.

Sisters In Crime Newsletter (Ed. S.I.C.) A "fanzine" for (mostly) women who enjoy crime fiction written by women. Part of an international organisation, they currently only have an Australian branch in Melbourne but they hope to spring up elsewhere.

Sticky Quarters (Brian Earl Brown) Yet another big US fanzine full of big names. I'm still in awe of BEB for the "Whole Fanzine Catalog" which he used to publish.

Mimosa (Dick and Nicki Lynch) Maybe it's luck or maybe it's something else but we only seem to get the bigger and better US fanzines in Australia (ditto for those previously mentioned). More Good Stuff.

Science Fiction - A Review of Speculative Literature (Van Ikin) Serious stuff. Focussed largely on Australian SF lately.

Science Fiction Eye (Stephen P. Brown) Okay - so this is a prozine but it's as friendly as a fanzine and

it deserves a wider readership. Rather less crusty than its competitors.

Science Fiction Chronicle (Andrew Porter) Andy is a bit crusty but he's lived through a pointless feud with Harlan and he provides good US market info.

The Frozen Frog (Benoit Girand) Whatever happened to big and brash Canadian fandom? Benoit is all I've seen lately. Come back - all is forgiven.

The Body Dabbler (Michael J. Tolley) A crime fiction fanzine from a South Australian academic. Covers current and historical Australian crime fiction.

LOCS:

OK - so I only got three letters of comment on "Ye Olde Sockes", but then I did make a plea for brevity in reply. Rather than string things out by reprinting them all in full, I shall let you savour just the highlights:

Irwin Hirsh of 26 Jessamine Avenue, East Prahran, Victoria, Australia 3181 writes:

I'm rather bemused about what's happening with the Ditmars. I've long thought that award systems such as the Ditmars are inherently corrupt, taking various areas of creative endeavour and bureaucratising them. I also wonder if they are an appropriate mode of honouring one's likes. 46 people voted for a fanzine this year in the Ditmars but I wonder how many of those 46 thought to actually contribute to their favoured editor's efforts. Like write a letter of comment, for instance. I'm relieved that Larrikin didn't make the final ballot in this year's {1991 - Ed} Ditmars as it would've looked pretty ridiculous given that we got no LoCs from any Aussies.

Meanwhile, in North America a few years ago there was a discussion which centred around the idea that a fanthology does a better job of honouring fanzine activity than do awards. The idea is that not only does a fanthology say that these are the best fanzines could offer in any particular year, but they show you why. Fanthology 1986 and Fanthology '87 were published in light of that discussion. The latter volume is also the first anthology to have a reasonable level of Australian content. Two articles

by Aussies were reprinted while one of the articles by a non-Aussie was first published in an Australian fanzine. The interesting thing is that if you look at the nominations for the 1988 Ditmars ("honouring" 1987 work) you'll find that there is no correlation between the '87 fanthology and the Ditmar nominations. In Ditmar terms, the authors of those two pieces weren't considered good enough, as was the fanzine which first published two of the selected articles.

My motto is: Let a thousand clowns loose on the Ditmars. That is if a thousand clowns haven't already been let loose on the things.

Mr Warner replies: It is difficult to do justice to Irwin's letter in this modern, word-processed typography. I can only describe to you the loving care with which Irwin has embellished his typewritten letter with generous splashes of white-out (on yellow paper, of course), the soldierly rows of X-ing outs and the hand-crafted, hand-written miniscule insertions. As such, it is a fine example of a truly fannish LoC. I am proud to have received it.

Seriousness aside, I agree about fanthologies being better than Ditmars, but then the Ditmars have almost been acknowledged as a National joke. It is almost traditional that there should be some sort of controversy associated with the Ditmars - whether it be silly categories like cats, or simple vote-stacking or getting the judges to change the category title so that your non-fanzine "periodical" can win an award. (If they don't change the category this year, Justin Ackroyd's "Slow Glass" mail-order book catalogue is a hot contender for this year's "best periodical").

There's even been talk of an annual Commemorative Roger Weddall Ditmar Controversy, but I'm sure that Roger would never have wanted any of his pranks to become expected.

Now on to David L. Russell of 196 Russell St, Dennington, Victoria 3280 Australia:

I wonder if you're as tired as I am of seeing Hunter S. Thompson blazoned across the front of Rolling Stone and then finding (as happened in the current issue on the stands) a one-page article. I think this month's rip-off was Thompson's reaction to Kitty Kelly's book on Nancy Reagan. Beware of hyperbole!

Mr Warner replies: You're right of course.

However, I did still buy the copy of Rolling Stone in question. I like most of the stuff that he writes but I'm not going to get obsessive about collecting everything he writes. There's no reason why Sturgeon's Law shouldn't apply to him as well. I'm prepared to believe that the poor souls who edit his big books really have sifted out the good stuff from the crap.

Lastly, but not leastly, Greg Egan, who lives in tiny GPO Box J685, Perth WA 6001 Australia writes:

Thanks for the copy of Ye Olde Sockes - not to mention the flattering portrait (still an accurate likeness, and still to scale).

Nice production values, but ... if there's anything I find harder to take an interest in than controversies in fandom, it'd probably be brain-dead gonzo journalists who are "living on the edge" and "wired" - in much the same way as Coke is "It". As commodities go, I guess Hunter S. Thompson is slightly more interesting than Michael J. Fox, Madonna, or Lady Di - but it's marginal.

I'd tell you to rush out and buy Elvis Costello's "Mighty Like A Rose", but I expect you already have. No doubt rock musicians, like writers, make fuck-all difference in the end, but it's still heartening to find one or two who swim against the tide of self-congratulatory vomit and hypocrisy that surrounds the genocide in the Gulf. From "The Invasion Hit Parade":

They're hunting us down with Liberty's light,
A hand-shaking double-talking procession of the mighty,
Pursued by a TV crew, and coming after them,
A limousine of singing stars and their
brotherhood anthem.

Mr Warner replies: I don't like the idea of Thompson as commodity, but I suppose you're right that he has been turned into one. I still like his writing. If you don't then we may just have to disagree there.

Funnily enough, "Mighty Like A Rose" is one of the few recent Costello albums that I haven't bought. I'm not totally sure why, because I've liked all of the Costello albums I've bought so far. It's nice to hear someone say something good about his recent output. The last few of Costello's albums have had a critical lashing, or at best, a lukewarm response. Geoff Roderick (formerly Roger

Weddall's partner) recently recommended "The Juliet Letters" to me - the album that Costello recorded with the Brodsky Quartet. I must catch up with both albums soon.

My most recent Costello purchase was the recent re-packaging of his first three albums on CD to include some extra previously unreleased or rare tracks, together with the rare "Live At The El Mocambo" album. It was \$90 well spent - and the vinyl versions had been played so much that they had got very crackly.

- ▶ We stole you off someone else's mailing list. (Luckily the people at "Farmyard Rubbergoods Incorporating Protective Gardening Equipment" Magazine didn't catch us.) (PS: your subscription is apparently overdue.)

Fanzine temporarily halted - Press Any Key to Continue...

Mention

has to be made here of David Cake - who was the only person to ask me for a copy of this zine - over 18 months before it was published! I just hope I've still got his current address. I suppose that almost qualifies as a pre-LOC.

Bruce

Gillespie also made a pre-publication comment when he saw an early draft of this zine, i.e. that he liked some of the typography. He didn't say anything about the content though!

WHY YOU RECEIVED THIS ZINE:

- ▶ You are a member of ANZAPA and now you can see what we get up to outside.
- ▶ You are a friend/family-member who had no idea that we did this sort of thing with our leisure time.
- ▶ You sent us a fanzine years ago and you've had to wait until now for a trade.
- ▶ This is a subtle reminder that you owe us a letter.
- ▶ We'd like to ingratiate you into voting for us in the DUFF race. Vote Warner and Sussex!
- ▶ Didn't Lucy/I/We meet you in the bar at erm.. er.. thingy-Con? (...and you still owe us a drink.)
- ▶ You didn't - you borrowed it from someone else. Now give it back.