

YORCON II

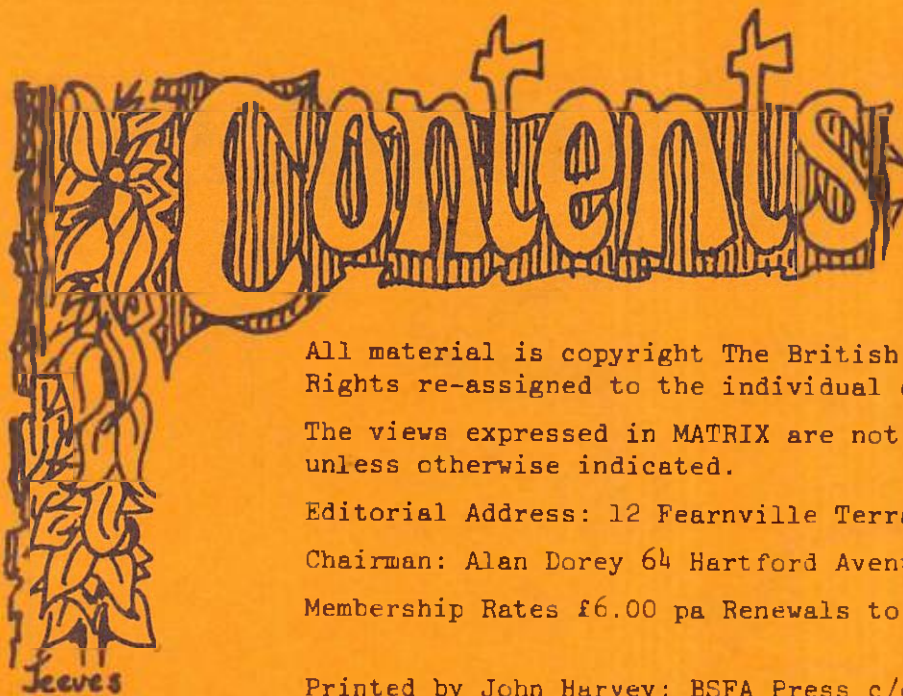
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THE BSFA NEWSLETTER

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LINDA STRICKLER: Quite a lot of the typing!

COMING REAL SOON NOW: A Serious Scientific Talk: Bob Shaw
 Don Wollheim - US Publisher and Writer
 Film Reviews and Usual Features

My 'editorial' is the last item I type so I get the opportunity here for an 'overview' of the contents - ie. I can make my excuses, stir things up, abuse Chuck Connor or announce my resignationsorry to disappoint you on the last count... despite several back-door attempts to unseat me, I reign supreme - but I would like to make an editorial change, provided the Council allows it, I would like Linda to join me in the editorship at the very least, she's a damn better typist than me!

Firstly, my comments last time around seem somehow appropriate in view of the attempted assassination of Reagan and the subsequent balls-up in the chain of command which, according to the Sunday Times, could well have produced WWII..... still, according to one correspondent, all this is boring.....

I had this vague idea in the late '70s that the punk/new wave music which had been thrust to the forefront of people's minds by the record industry, was going to develop much in the same way as it did in the '60s - ie the skinheads would forget about cutting their hair, grow bum-fluff beards, bleach their levis, trundle down Portobello Road on a Saturday morning and get stoned in Hyde Park - not that that represents any particular kind of Utopia - nor any hippie dream of revolution/universal panacea - but at least I would have been able to observe, more closely, many of the developments which I either missed, or followed just that important one year late (or more). If you'd believe all those people who claim that "they were there at the Isle of Wight in '68" then that tiny island would have been inhabited by around 5 million people.

Much the same seems to happen in Fandom... of course, everyone you meet went to SEACON, they all know, intimately, Bob Shaw, they've all read Science Fiction since they had their first change of nappies, and they all had sex when they got their first pair of long trousers (or whatever the equivalent is). Why? Why do so many people, so obviously, expand their personalities to fit some stereo-typed macho image of how they should appear to others?

I was prompted to write this short missive by two unrelated, but loosely connected events - I was on my way to a convention when I drove past a band of 'mods', complete with scooters, parkers, and, stunningly, THE WHO slogans, complete with the arrow through the O just as it was 15-odd years ago - severe time-distortion eh? The second linking event

was at this convention where sometime during the evening in a casual but friendly conversation, someone remarked to me that they hadn't had sex until they were 25 - now that was quite an admission, I thought. The more significant feature is that no-one turned round and laughed, or ridiculed, rather we felt admiration for that person's honesty. Right, I thought, if they can say something like that, I can openly admit that I didn't start reading Science Fiction until I was 20 - and then maybe I won't have to fake, continually, my reponse to those buffs who commandeer one in the bar of a convention and ask your opinion on the great Science Fiction classics of all time (whatever they may be). Instead of people trying to live up to these images, I reckon they'd be a damn sight more content if they had "nothing to live up to.."

OK - before I get accused of trying to act as a 'problem-page' consultant, I might just add that from what I hear from Peel, and from what Pete Lyon tells me, the 'Liverpool Scene' is happening once more - this time with a 'head' start, so maybe I'll get that chance to sharpen-up and correct my street credentials.

NOT ONLY ARE YOU
A LOUSY LOVER BUT
YOU DIDN'T BUY
ANY BATTERIES FOR
THE HUGO



Now for that 'overview'....this is definitely a largish issue, due to a substantial mail-bag and the receipt of a number of articles from members - please continue (those of you who have) and those who haven't - well, you're probably not reading this anyway. I would like to continue, as far as possible, to include members own articles, reviews, news, art-work etc - obviously I will not include all material without reference to standard, and I shall continue to use those well-known/respected contributors - but my general policy will be to try and give scope to people who

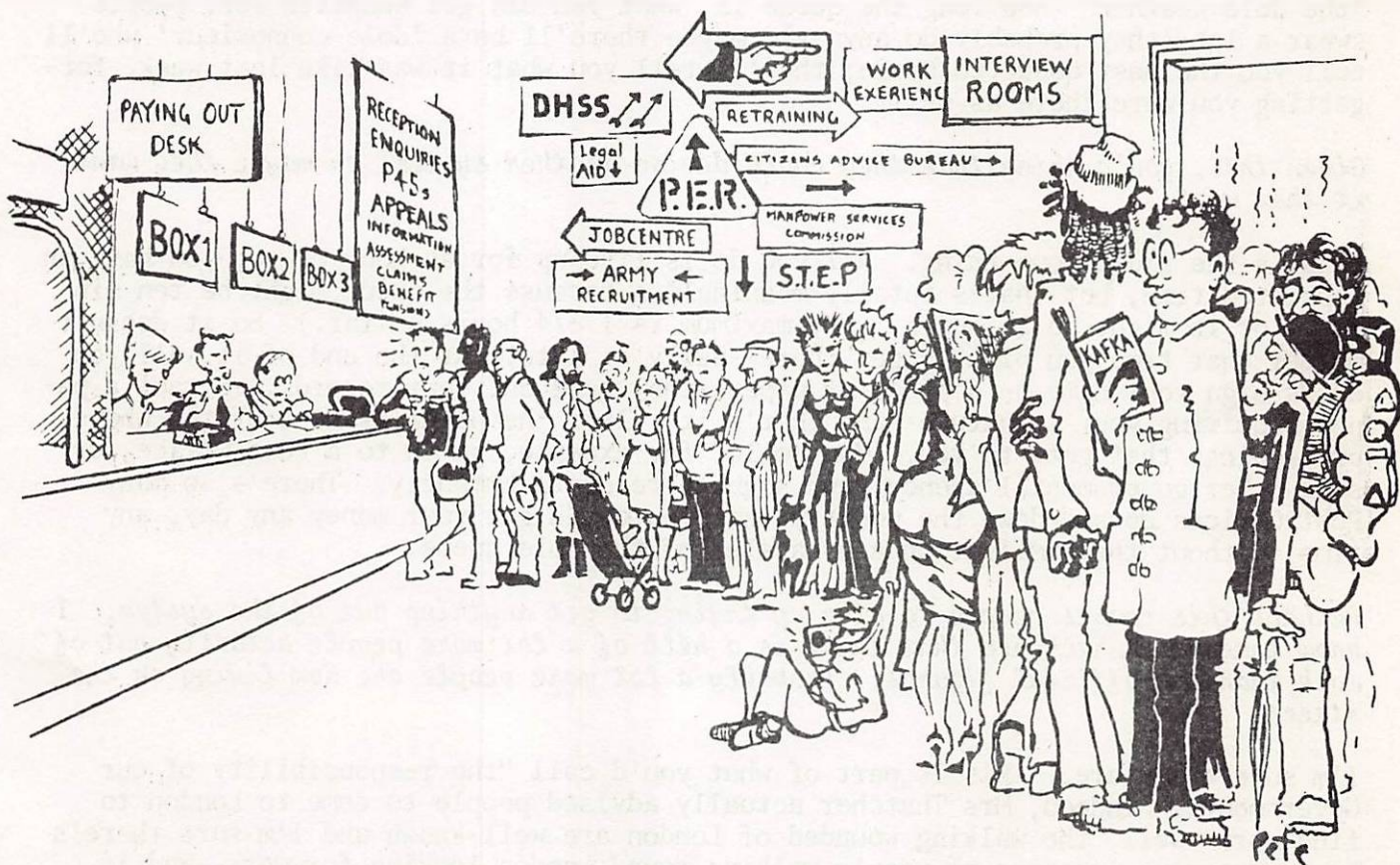
Social Security is worse then?

Unemployment benefit is bad enough--it's where you're paraded, almost like waiting for the Gas Chambers, but, to continue the Hitlerite analogy, it really is the SS treatment when you go to Social Security. You are pinned down over each item of expenditure--they want to know who you're living with, what you're doing with them. You're in danger all the time of being investigated and snooped on.

That's right; I notice that in a recent report, they've talked about setting up a special squad of interrogators to go round and investigate those people who they think might be "on the scrounge".

They've already done that--in Liverpool and Manchester--they are going through the registers, pulling out names at random, visiting addresses, checking whether the person is in--and if they're not, they come back later with some more colleagues. They batter the person, verbally, to a point where the person probably agrees that, because they weren't in on the previous day, they weren't entitled to benefit for that week, and then they get them to sign off completely. So, when they do sign on again, the authorities will have saved so many days expenditure. That's already happening and they're planning to extend it.

Sometimes, after this battering, people get to realise or find out about their rights--they come back and eventually re-claim for the lost period--it probably takes more in administrative costs in the long run to sort it out than it would have done to let the person continue signing on in the first place--still, at least it keeps these people in jobs!



Do you think that there are, then, conscious efforts on the part of officials to discourage people from claiming benefits?

The whole Social Security System seems to work like that--it can be one giant hassle--you see that in the offices. If you haven't got an address, you can't get any money--there are people in hysterics, asking for money right away; maybe they've no food, nothing. They can be dealt with coldly, ruthlessly, efficiently and told of "the rules". It can be horrendous--a bit like a scene from a Bosch painting.

Yes, a Kafkaesque nightmare.

Absolutely--well the whole thing, of course, is a little like Kafka ... you say ... "Why me, this is ridiculous, it must be a dream" ...

They ask you to produce one piece of information, you go away and get it, come back, and then they demand another piece of information. I've even found that myself: I worked for two weeks, but I wasn't to be paid for it until some time later. I had no money in that period, but after three visits I gave up trying to get some benefit. It seemed that there was no way I was going to get the money--they required more information, and more information, forms to be signed by this and that person, and since I would have had to pay the money back to them anyway, I gave up. I wasn't starving, but for those that are, I'm sure that process still goes on.

And yet that Report I referred to, said that something like 12% of those on benefit are "on the scrounge". By the same token, and given what you've said, I wonder exactly what percentage is being deprived of their rights by virtue of not having a bloody clue to what they're entitled and how to claim it.

Right. And that 12% doesn't ring true, based on my experiences in the dole queues. You only have to be in one to sense the sheer desperation of the whole thing--there's a sort of 'odour of doleness'. People tramp into the offices, rather like dogs with their tails between their legs. Literally, a smell of unwashed people--really unwashed, like they've given up completely. There's a whole atmosphere of deadness, like being with zombies.

People faint in dole queues--long queues where nothing happens. They tend to devolve inwards--there's not much talking in dole queues except along the lines of 'the dole-weather'--how long the queue is, what you can get benefits for; people swear a lot (they probably do anyway); maybe there'll be a 'dole-connosieur' who'll tell you the best queue to be in; they'll tell you what it was like last week, forgetting you were there as well.

Given this, you'd think that they could devise another system, or maybe they want it that way?

This is the ridiculous thing. All you do is line up for an hour or so; you have an appointed time, but that's totally meaningless because the queue might be ten minutes, or it might be 1½ hours. (My maximum is 1 ¾ hours so far.) So it doesn't matter what time you plan to get there--early or late. At the end of it, all you do is sign your name on a piece of paper--they take out your records, extract a paper requiring your signature--and that's it. It's the pointlessness of the whole proceedings that gets to you. You could, for example, go in to a Post Office, or some other governmental agency, and sign there quite humanely. There's so many Post Offices up and down the country that you could get your money any day, any time, without the humiliation and hassles of the dole queue.

Perhaps this causes people to give up trying to get anything out of the system. I know that it is reckoned that there is a hell of a lot more people actually out of work than the official figures. Probably a lot more people are now living on the street.

I'm sure there are. This is part of what you'd call "the responsibility of our Government". Indeed, Mrs Thatcher actually advised people to come to London to find work--well, the walking wounded of London are well-known and I'm sure there's been a massive increase of people walking round London looking for work--and if you get work you need a job that pays more than the average to be able to live in London and get somewhere to live.

That's the great danger; whilst we do have 'x' million people unemployed, we don't seem to have that much concern about them, because we have a Welfare State--and, supposedly, we don't allow people to starve. You also get those who claim that we pay too much money to those unemployed ("not enough incentive ... etc etc"), so we get a minority group being attacked.

Yes, of course, it's only when it hits you personally that you realise what's going on. People will open their newspapers and say "oh, it's up to 2½ million"--and they don't seem terribly worried.

There are many minority groups of people, or particular individuals, who are probably particularly susceptible to discrimination--if you're an employer, it's easy to pick and choose right now.

I'm sure this goes on--there are plenty of examples--you know, you phone up for a job, with a Yorkshire accent, they invite you down, and when you get there, you've got a black face, the job's already gone. There's certainly a high proportion of black people, or asians, out of work. But, there again, I can't be certain because you have a certain day allocated for collecting the dole; I'm in the 'D's, 'E's and 'F's, which must leave out a lot of the "Khans".

One of the interesting things is that there's very few women in the dole queues--I don't know whether that means that women in the North are still paid less than men (and consequently men are made redundant first), or whether it means that in the North, women still tend to have part-time jobs, so when they're out of work, they have to rely on Social Security. Certainly, when I've been to the Social Security, there's a higher proportion of women. No doubt someone, somewhere, is doing the figures.

And what the figures don't tell you is that unemployment will probably remain high in the future. Before we've had "cyclical unemployment"--that is, there's a recession, high unemployment, then the economy picks up and unemployment goes down. The thirties were bad, but those people came back into employment, or at least went to war. But now, we've got a combination of a long-term recession and the effects of technology eliminating jobs permanently. What will be the effect of this larger hard-core of long-term unemployed?

Well, the effects you can already see from the fact that half the dole queue is young kids under 20, and probably a further third are over 50. Whether there'd be any work ever for the under 20's is questionable--it's a question of under 20, unskilled,--the sort of people who once might have said ... "Oh, I'll join the army," ... or ... "I'll be a grease-monkey"--but those "opportunities" are no longer available. They're facing a lifetime of unemployment.

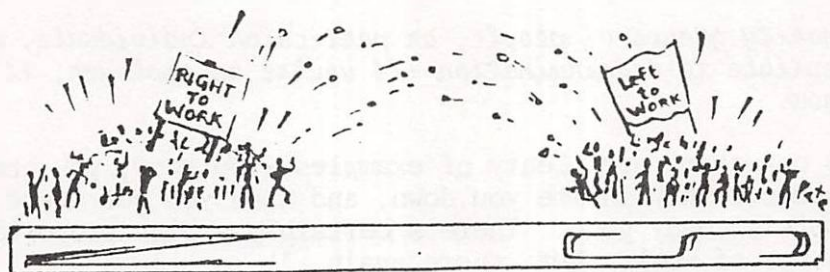
That, combined with the dropping out of the education system, and the cuts and dropping of education courses (like the starving of the WEA) means that there aren't any circuses, and the bread is pretty poor.

So, what is going to happen to this hard-core unemployed--which way do you think they will turn? Will they start reacting against the system, in a sort of radical (revolutionary) way, or will they start picking on other groups of people as scapegoats?

Well, you have groups of the extreme right and left outside the dole queues, handing out leaflets etc. One of the particularly interesting things is the way the National Front are trying to disguise their leaflets to look like those of the left; they're printed in very-red ink, using the same type-face as labour party or other leftist groups. The National Front has even described itself as 'social democrats' in a recent by-election. They're working very hard on the dole-queues, but I don't think they are having a great deal of success. One of the things which seems inevitably associated with dole-queues, and with being unemployed, is firstly a sort of "Parkinson's disease", where things spread out to fill the time available, and secondly, a



general apathy which settles over you. You can get away from it for a while, but you're forced to remember it, at least every two weeks. I don't think many people would be in a position to form this reaction.



You said that both the so-called left and right have recognised that there's a group of people who they can recruit, potentially, to their particular way of thinking-- and maybe we don't know which way it's going to go--but are they really uniting people?



People will take their literature for something to read while they are queuing, then there's this litter all the way up the stairs, like some hellish wedding, as people have got rid of the stuff and obviously taken no notice of it.

A lot of the time, people pay lip-service to the problem. You get certain things presented ... "Cheap prices for claimants" ... It's almost like the dead--we're getting a lot of polite euphemisms. On punk-lines, you can get in to punk clubs cheaply. You get the left and right inviting you to rallies, so you can appear under a banner ... "This is genuine unemployed people" ... but there's no feeling that they are actually touching anybody.

Another attempt, which is taking a completely different line, rather than attempts at mobilisation of unemployed people to a particular cause, is trying to get together groups of unemployed people, for regular meetings, discussions, etc.

Dole therapy! Yes, well it might work, I dunno. I've grown suspicious. It's a little bit like probation officers--one feels that people handling that type of thing have got a particular hook which they want to sink into someone's flesh. I'd also question who'd go--the most likely people would be those in the "professional classes". The sad executives are in the dole queues now--still in their business suits which are getting shinier as the weeks go by as they can't afford to replace them, or their cars they used to get every two years. It might do them a lot of good to go because they'll be worried about being surrounded at very close quarters by what may have been their work-force at one time.

So you don't see much future for any particular efforts to help the unemployed?

Well, maybe we're all going on the dole-queue. Just what will eventually develop, I'm not sure. It could be riots, I don't know. But you are creating a mob. At the moment, it's a very, very apathetic mob, but that's at the moment.

Banally mixed up in the general euphoria surrounding science fiction over the last few years, I, whose previous whole-hearted convictions to SF fandom were receiving the Doctor Who annual regularly as a child and later receiving MATRIX, VECTOR, TANGENT, FOCUS, etc decided, in the same general state of stupor, to start a fanzine.

It's Hard Being A Cowboy In Rochdale. GEOFF BOSWELL

For all you experienced zine editors (more than six issues), I need not add any expletives regarding the horrors of 'starting somewhere'. To those of you in the process of deciding whether or not SF needs another John Campbell, may I urge you to carry on thinking a little longer.

Of course, what made the situation worse, was the fact that, not being content to suffer verbal injustices and bring the wife and cat to shame with aforesaid fanzine, I thought, also, what an absolutely spiffing idea it would be to start a local SF group. Oh yes, the Birmingham SF group cater very well, thank you, but here on the West side of the second city, things are rather thin on the ground. Presumably, I thought of myself as the West Midlands' SF answer to Dorey or Nicholas or something - a kind of Che in a Star Trek badge....Oh, oh, oh! Better than a kick in the teeth, I suppose.

A guy who calls on me at work in Stourbridge and I, had spent many quiet hours in my office jawing about Clarke and Silverberg, or the really good authors like Dave Langford and Chris Morgan. Anyway, his name is Steve Berrington and he's more of a neo than me (a sort of Preo, if you'll forgive the liberty) - he allowed himself to be verbally press-ganged into agreeing to start the ball rolling. Eagerly clutching a sheet of Letraset (in the words of my good friend Paul Higgs - subliminal advertising rules, OK?) and zillions of reams of offcut paper, donated to the cause by my aunt who works at a printers, I set forth to take the world and Dudley by storm.

With unhesitating endeavour, I cut out little pictures of SF books from publishers' catalogues ready to paste these on a sheet of paper under the zine title, EVENSTAR. This name was democratically decided upon by Stevie and I, and no-one, not even Steve, has yet spotted the joke. For weeks, I expected some bright twit to write to me (those that can write) and begin his literary tirade with...."Just received ish 3 of Evening Star...." Oh, God, the funs gone out of SF. I digress somewhat. I type my (should be our) editorial - Editam - with a flourish. Begging for response only forty-two times; I type SF movies in the fifties; I type a Bobby Silverbug profile; I insert the Yellow Pages booksellers section (WOW); a totally intellectual and boring piece on Lasers is inserted, with other bits, all photocopied on my firm's Mintoltafax wet copier (therefore buckshee - don't show this to my boss), and I called that a fanzine. To continue this barrage of tastelessness and ill-humour, I possess a stapler that doesn't staple and an optimism paralleled only by my stupidity. Not to mention a copyright infringement which remains nameless - see MATRIX 32, page 24, for further remarks.

Now, however, I get clever: I make a list of 25 local people, drafted from the BSFA membership list. I then mail 25 copies of E1 to prospective members. You are, by now, stunned into submission by my charm, wit, resourcefulness and total lack of concept of reality. Now, one facet of SF is to report on the occurrence of improbable or unlikely events - and this is what happened - some people liked it.

I set about on ish 2 in much the same manner. The cover was a picture of a Nuclear blast with titles, et al, over the top. Great idea. Bum job. Although this ish included a story by P Higgs (which would have been liked by Rob Jackson, if he could have read it) and an article on Jim England - local boy, author of THE MEASURED CAVERNS and erstwhile contributor to VECTOR. This brought a little more response, usually -- aaghh -- and therefore ish 3 had a moderate lettercol.

Meantime I write to Dave Langford asking him for copies of the BSFA press release. These I duly receive, and with a PR of my own, I mail out to eight local rags. They'll file them, I thought, and if something SFy comes up, they'll check to see what they have on the subject.

Wrong.

I receive a phone call from the Dudley Herald arranging for a reporter and photographer to visit me that afternoon. Moments later, the phone rings again. "Lye Crematorium", I quip. "Mr Boswell?" the female fatale enquires, "Yep" I says. "It's the express and Star here, Mr Boswell!" Well, being an old hand with the press now, I agree what she would like to paraphrase from the letter, and generally, can't tell her enough.

During that week I was the star of two articles, one with a photo! Later that week the County Express wanted to do an article so I managed to fit them in between George Scithers and Jim Baen. Another photo at that....To come to the crux of the matter, when someone says that exposure is all-important, don't believe a word they say - I received five letters as a result of my nation-wide coverage. If I had been a wife-bashing, kidnapping, bank robber with rapist tendencies, I couldn't have received less mail.

To coincide with my meteoric rise to mega-stardom, I also issue a single page newsletter, LASERHEART. An Ellisonish enough name, democratically chosen by me.

At this juncture I must add that Steve B has yet to find the time or patience required to co-edit the zine and so ish 3 is mailed, the last bearing his monica.

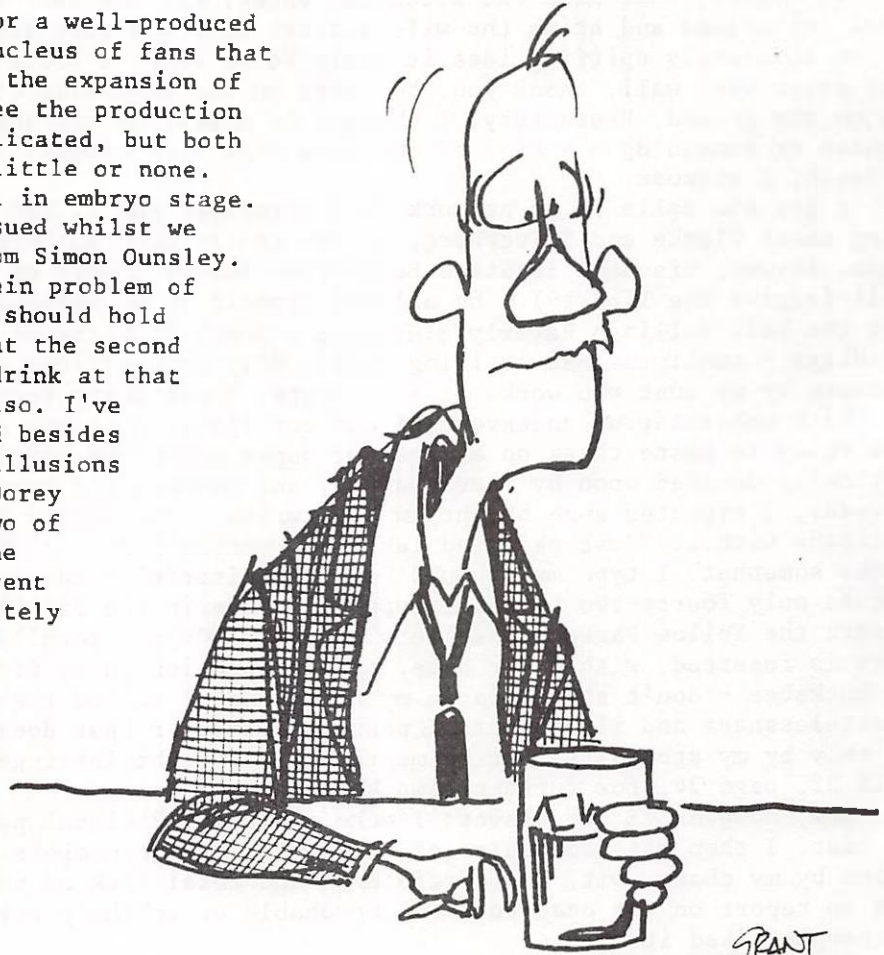
A lot better is ish 3. Reverts to the bookcover pictures (3) but has a cover done on a dry copier (5 pence a copy, it's dericulous), includes a short story by Ian Wright and some other goodies. Last time a science fact item appears in this issue, having found that my two-part spectacular on 'Nuclear safety and the European Community' has sunk without a trace. Favourable criticism abounds after people see the improvement apparent in this issue. Promises of regular contributions come pouring in, all three of them, and suddenly the next three issues look very bright. As Juanita Coulson once said, "Not many fanzines reach voting age (21).. and much less reach double figures. Obviously, from a purely selfish point of view, I would like to see EVEN-STAR reach double figures.

It is not an original zine nor a well-produced one: but it is a contact for the nucleus of fans that do write regularly. No doubt, with the expansion of the group, members would like to see the production more polished, either litho or duplicated, but both these cost money, of which I have little or none.

As I type, the group is still in embryo stage. Some stand-in posters have been issued whilst we eagerly await the BSFA thingies from Simon Ounsley. We have still yet to conquer our main problem of which part of the Black Country we should hold our first meeting, but I'm sure that the second major problem - who will buy me a drink at that first meeting - will be resolved also. I've attended NOVACON 10, in spasms, and besides seeing the stars (and having some illusions shattered....'So that's what Alan Dorey looks like!'), I happened to meet two of my postal pals, Keith and Glenn, The Pugh Brothers (not an ad for a current blues music film). Things is definitely on the up.

Ish 4 is looking radiant in her Letraset cover with Christmas cartoon and a quality of content surpassed only by that of OMNI and PRE-INCUBUS. I sit at this portable merry, pushing fingers in the direction of the little black things with letters on, totally ignoring the needs of Tippex and of the Collins Family Dictionary to make their directors

loaded. Not only is it a thankless task, it's hard being an Editor in Brierly Hill.....



WHERE ONCE THE SEA HAS GUZZLED: A look at Fandom in The Netherlands
by ROELOF GOUDRIAAN

I'll never be able to riggle out of it. One moment of matrimonial sin, approved of by even the religious authorities, and I find myself born in the Netherlands, an irretrievable misfortune which still yeilds me an endless series of requests to tell something about 'sf in the Netherlands'. People are fascinated by exotic places like these barbaric lowlands, I guess, or maybe they just want the reassurance that they are the ones who are better off.

Anyhow, this opportunity to vent my feelings in MATRIX will spare me a score of familiar questions at YORCON, and that thought alone is a sufficient motivation to write a scribble on even a subject as gnawed off as this one.

Alright then, Nosy Parkers, the Netherlands are truly very much alive. Translations of US and UK authors are invading the shelves of all booksellers, and most tobacconists, in mass, up to the latest Heinleinian atrocity; a modest number of Dutch authors see their work professionally,

published, and, more important, there is real fandom.

It's a small country I live in; 14 million inhabitants; one prozine; and only five fanzines. The prozine ORBIT is, just like in soccer, the national pride of the entire Dutch fancommunity, though the merit of editor/publisher Kees van Toorn alone. Nationally distributed, as glossy as STARSHIP, and with an intelligent content varying from shorts by big names like Vance, Knight, and Pohl, to intelligent articles on films, fandom, and sf in South America. A pearl which degrades AD ASTRA to the status of laughable Crudzine!

In a sharp contrast with ORBIT, is KING KONG SF, for the greater part filled with editorials by linguistic genius Rob Vooren. The twenty-page TESB colour supplement of ORBIT may attract an odd eight thousand sf lovers, but it's the whimsical perception of a romanticist like Rob which forms the crown of Dutch fandom, at least for me, and the other forty-one subscribers to KING KONG SF.

HOLLAND-SF is the clubzine of the Dutch national SF Organisation, the NCSF. It is a critical publication, in parts not unlike VECTOR, which is mailed to the 500+ NCSF members on a bimonthly schedule. Third on the list is the only Dutch fanzine which is published in English, my very own (sob) FOREIGN FANZINE, a highly personal mixture of sercon and fannish material, worth every penny I'm asking for it. And I don't appreciate sarcastic remarks of ungrateful bastards who got a free copy!

One ficzine, enthusiastically published by a young fan in a thousand-copy printrun, and the unavoidable Perry Rhodan zine complete the picture. I shall be decent enough to refrain from giving my opinion about that last zine in public: I hate to write down such vulgar diatribes.

The Netherlands is a small Country, as I've said before, and a shameless chorus of psychologists after me. It shows in fandom: there's no space for local clubs with their pub-gossips. But, when we do something nationally, we don't do it on a Dutch scale! Let's take as a perfect example BENELUXCON - an annual convention which is held, alternately, in Belgium and the Netherlands. Slowly, but steadily, this series of conventions has built a reputation, not unlike that of its British counterpart, Eastercon. BENELUXCON, though, has an international design: a place where fans from the Benelux countries, Germany, France, and Britain can meet each other simultaneously. Perhaps that's one of the major charms of these conventions: they're a continuous four-language bustle, but without the language barrier some of you will have experienced at French conventions. Though tradition wants some programme items in all four major languages, English is the only common vehicle which can be used in this international company, and as a result, most panels, speeches and discussions are in English, as is a great part of the bar talks.

They're kind of special, these cons. Who can forget when Kees Van Toorn managed to give a fairly coherent speech at ten o'clock in the morning, an odd four hours after he'd left the room-parties, or Joe Haldeman, who outstripped even Kees by an hour, or the auction which ended in the dingy water of the pond in front of the Fabiolahome, where one of the auctioneers burned a German horror comic - stark naked - for the worthy cause.

Oh, Beneluxcons are improving still. No more waiting for a closed door because the initiator of the room-party is still in the other con hotel, a kilometre out of the centre, as I'm told happened in Eindhoven. The next, eighth, Beneluxcon will be held in one large and luxurious hotel, the Atlanta in Rotterdam. The con committee has sought for months, haggling all over the country, before it could find such an ideal place - and managed to half room rates as well!

And they're eager to prove themselves careful on all points. I received the conformation of my hotel booking more than a month ago - six months before the con itself will be held. In their search for suitable Guests of Honour, they've found Jack Vance, Fred Pohl, and Kate Wilhelm. They've also pulled the next World SF meeting to Rotterdam, right before the Con, and we are now expecting a large number of international guests to walk about the con informally, like Sam Lundwall, Harry Harrison, and Damon Knight.

This is turning into a bloody commercial, isn't it, and I'm not even a member of the con committee. Well, now that I'm so shamelessly propagandizing the con, I might as well give you some more hard facts. It will be held from 28 to 30 August 1981 in the Atlanta hotel in Rotterdam. Room rates are f50 (about £9.45) per person per night, and attending membership is f35 (about £6.45) until the end of April. A single ticket, London to Rotterdam by British Rail (via Harwich-Hoek van Holland) will cost you about £22 - in other words, BENELUXCON is affordable. Total travelling time from London to the Atlanta is only nine hours; some of you will have travelled longer to get to ALBACON!

Why shouldn't you come, and let me buy you a drink and tell your friends all about your lknowledge of 'sf in the Netherlands'? It's fun to do - for a couple of months at least - which is the way this article started.

The bad news - there will also be a banquet.

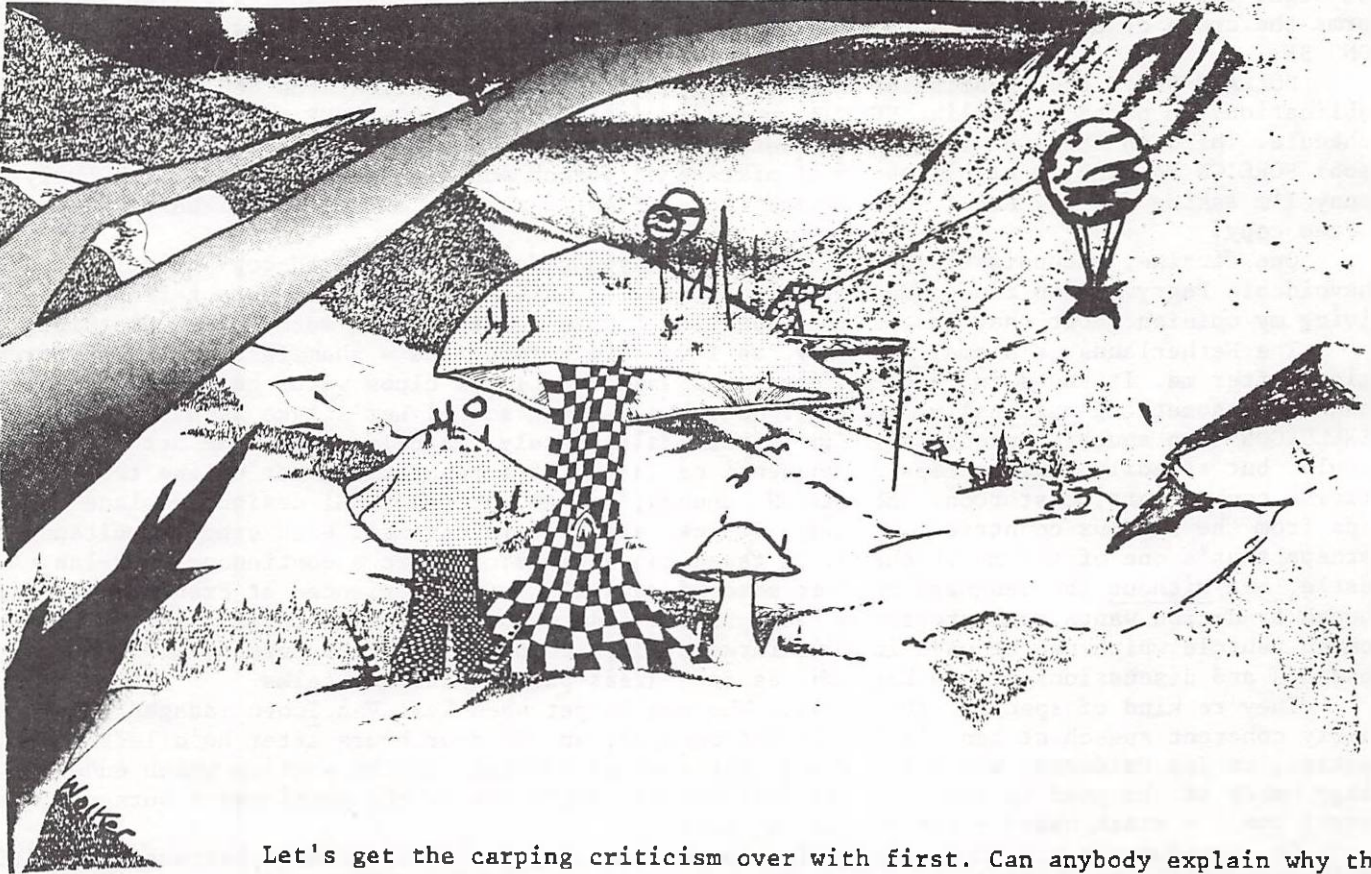
Argh!

for further info:

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3435 DK Nieuwegein
The Netherlands

Reviews

THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON by H. G. WELLS. Dramatised for radio by
Terry James. Broadcast Saturday 17th January 1981 on Radio 4



Let's get the carping criticism over with first. Can anybody explain why this dramatisation of a novel from the first years of the present century should possess more thrill-power than the recently broadcast BBC SF serial EARTH-SEARCH? The latter is worthy enough although it's giving us the same ingredients to many a stew we've tasted before, but surely that's the same criticism that can be made of Wells? How many stories about the first moon-landing of alien contact

have we read? Hasn't it all been outdated by reality?

Yet *The First Men In The Moon* is an undoubted classic. 'Seminal' is the word I believe I used to put in my English Lit. essays once I found out that it didn't mean anything smutty. Take it as fantasy rather than SF if you like - the science content is garbage now, and has been for some time - it still possessed enough magic to keep me enthralled for 90 minutes: the discovery of the gravity-opaque material, 'cavorite'; the voyage to the moon, the discovery of vegetable life, the mooncalves and the encountering of the Selenites and the nature of their civilisation, did someone murmur 'sense of wonder?' Well, perhaps, but the England of 1900 is, in many ways, as far from us now as the surface of Wells' moon, and it is the contrast between these different millieux which sparks the magic. Wells used an alien setting to point out some truths about his own society. He wasn't the first to use this device, and he certainly won't be the last, but because he did it so well, because he was a good and creative writer in touch with the 'modern spirit' - the explosive development of science and technology - he succeeded in writing books which appealed to that spirit. And because he succeeded, we can see the roots of our own society exposed to us.

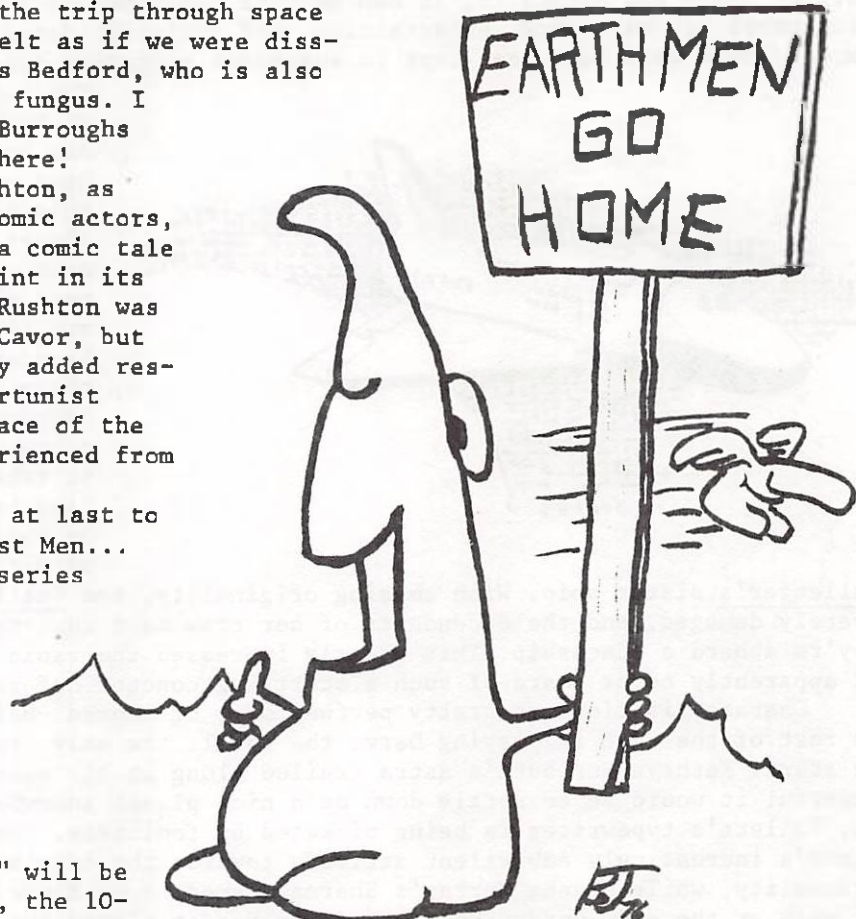
Glyn Dearman's direction of the dramatisation was straight down the line no-nonsense: a mixture of narrative and dialogue with a minimum of electronic wizardry apart from the metallic buzzing and chirping of the Selenites. Both script and acting held a delicate balance between seriousness and ham, lightness and farce. The trip to the moon is very much two middle-class English gentlemen on a spree, but each character has his own powering obsession: Cavor, pure science, exploration; Bedford, commerce - "a whole fleet of cavorite liners people would pay." Both expressions of the Bourgeois Individualist of Edwardian England as opposed to the

Military/industrial complex of today. But Wells, like his characters of the fringes rather than the centre of the 'respectable' middle class, points out the innocence (or complacency?) of the British Bourgeois at the height of Empire-building: "What a place this could be for our surplus population!" they breathe, gazing out on the verdant lunar landscape, as we, from our late 20th century stance, mutter 'imperialism' beneath our breath. What a rude awakening for them and a crisis of conscience for Cavor as the Selenites are seen to be more than savages to be easily conquered! But how 'natural' and how equally innocent, is Cavor's assumption that the alien can easily share communication! And the trip through space itself - what a lark it all is. "I felt as if we were disembodied.... and relaxed..." comments Bedford, who is also the first to sample the intoxicating fungus. I wonder how Philip K Dick or William Burroughs would have treated the implications here!

Hywell Bennett and William Rushton, as Bedford and Cavor, are essentially comic actors, and THE FIRST MEN... is essentially a comic tale which builds up to make a serious point in its sombre ending. I did wonder whether Rushton was too bluff and hearty to make a good Cavor, but Bennett's TV 'Shelley' character only added resonance to his playing the sharp opportunist Bedford, panicking slightly in the face of the Alien in a way we have recently experienced from the adventures of one Arthur Dent.

The BBC seem to be trying hard at last to produce some interesting SF. THE First Men... is "the first play in an occasional series that follows the writing of science fiction from the turn of the century to the present day." (Radio Times). No doubt the emphasis will be on fairly traditional, safe stuff - Wyndham is another name mentioned in connection with the series - but if it is done as well as this we may well complain about "what is included" but the "how-it-is-done" will be satisfactory. Meanwhile, EARTHSEARCH, the 10-part serial proved to be moderately entertaining, if somewhat po-faced; LORD OF THE RINGS started broadcasting on 10 March - a treat for we more geriatric fans; and in the same week, Radio 3 broadcast the last remaining episode in captivity (apart from a complete set in the possession of Radio Sarawak) of JOURNEY INTO SPACE. According to the interview with him in the Liverpool Daily Post, just about the only person not greeting this news with opening arms is writer/producer Charles Chilton who seemed slightly exasperated by it all.

There is something slightly disquieting about the fact that it is a 20-year old adventure SF series which is causing most enthusiasm in the BBC's plans to broadcast more SF. I shall appreciate the BBC's activities if something appears in the current flurry of radio SF which is as innovative and entertaining as JIS was in its day. Radio can be in the vanguard of broadcasting some types of SF: THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY proved that, much of the humour falling flat on the printed page or the small screen. Radio "reduces drama to its elemental parts" (Harold Pinter) and you don't have to rely on expensive visual effects: you have the direct contact of live actors plus your own imagination. Perhaps enough interest will be roused by the series of adaptations to commission some really first-rate original material? Meanwhile the adventures of Cavor and Bedford made an excellent introduction to this series. It's an obvious start to a look at science fiction, but none the worse for that: it certainly reminded me of how few of those writers who admit a debt to Wells' "scientific romances" approach him in breadth of imagination and humanity.



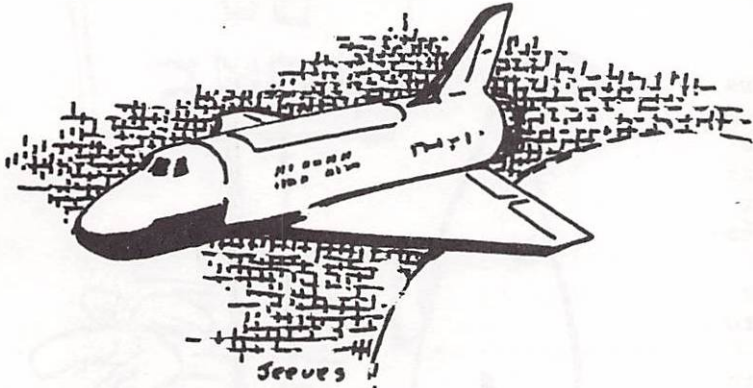
ANDY SAWYER

EARTHSEARCH: BBC RADIO 4: REVIEWED BY ALEX STEWART

Whatever its merits and deficiencies, one area in which the BBC remains unsurpassed is re-inventing the wheel. Urged on, no doubt, by the success of HITCH-HIKER'S, they have come to the startling conclusion that Radio is an ideal medium for science fiction.

So over the past few months, we've heard THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON (reviewed in this issue by Andy Sawyer), JOURNEY INTO SPACE, a lovingly crafted reproduction, designed to demonstrate how much more sophisticated even media SF has become over the years; and EARTHSEARCH.

EARTHSEARCH, by James Follett, was billed as "A ten-part adventure serial in time and space" and, for those who missed it, it can best be described as the aural equivalent of a Douglas R Mason novel. It was slick, entertaining, and curiously dated. Apart from a few coy references to sex, it could well have been kept in suspended animation since the early sixties.



The generation ship Challenger has returned to Earth after 115 years, only to find that, due to time dilation, over a million years have passed in the solar system. During this time, fearing the Sun will go nova, Planet Earth has upped stakes and gone to pastures new. The crew of four spend the next nine episodes bouncing around the galaxy like a pinball, taking it in turns to blunder into trouble and be extricated by the other two. In the meantime, the ship's computers, known through some tortuous acronym as 'Angels' are secretly conspiring to take over the Earth - assuming they ever find it again.

On the way home, the crew meet a decadent warrior culture, a killer android, and the

Challenger's sister ship. With amusing originality, the Challenger II has suffered a mutiny, been severely damaged, and the descendants of her crew have reverted to savagery and forgotten that they're aboard a spaceship. This greatly impressed the radio critic of THE TIMES, no less, who had apparently never heard of such a startling concept before.

Characterisation was pretty perfunctory, of course. Hadyn Wood had a slight advantage over the rest of the cast in playing Darv, the rebel, the only crew member to doubt the Angels from the start. Kathryn Hurlbutt's Astra trailed along in his wake, prattling incessantly about how wonderful it would be to settle down on a nice planet somewhere and have children. No doubt even now, Follett's typewriter is being picketed by feminists. Sean Arnold managed to convey Commander Telson's increasingly ambivalent attitude towards the Angels without routing it in any definable personality, while Amanda Murray's Sharna seemed to be there simply to give him someone to pair off with at the end. Gordon Reid and Sonia Fraser played the Angels like the pop-hating parents in a sixties' teen musical.

On the whole, though, EARTHSEARCH wasn't half bad. The story rattled along merrily from one cliff-hanging climax to the next, and though some of the holes in the plot were big enough to fly the CHALLENGER through (it was ten miles long - of course), Follett managed to skate over them quite neatly.

One reservation I do have is over the final few lines, which just might be the set-up for a sequel. If this is Follett's intention, I would urge him to forget it. He has the ability to write lucid SF for a mass audience, and I would like to see him develop it in a more challenging direction than simple space opera.

STALKER: Director: Andrei Tarkovsky. 161 Minutes
REVIEWED BY MARTYN TAYLOR

The current rash of SF films all seem to be of the stainless steel and white plastic type, and that's only the heroes. For the most part they are all good, mindless fun that never threaten to give you the intellectual kick in the head that can ensue from reading, say, a Vonnegut or a Brunner book. Because of the Looking Glass economies of the film industry, most films (of whatever type) are made by people who have been forced to make too many compromises in too short a time, who have to aim at the lowest common denominator of intelligence and discretion in order for the film to earn enough to keep the next but one studio boss in mink Y-fronts, and who've learnt, what masquerades as their 'art', in the sausage machine of television. How many films

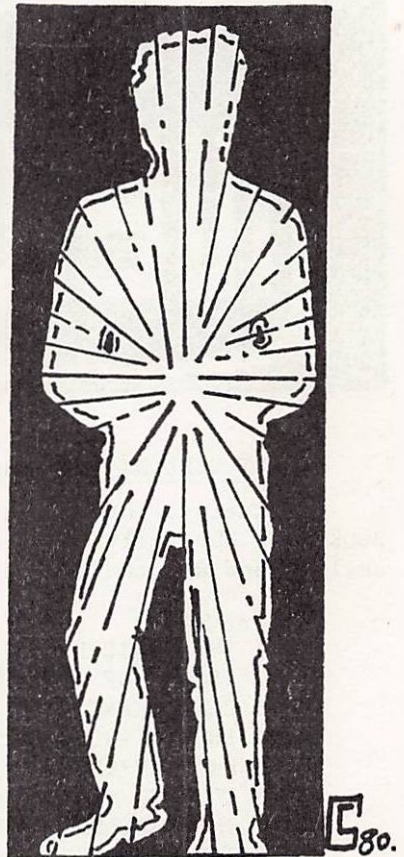
seem to have grown from what must have been a good idea at the time, only to see that idea left behind on some cutting room floor? It is a rare film that is an obviously personal statement by the director, leaving no doubt as to the signature at the bottom. APOCALYPSE NOW was such a film, stretching the definition of SF somewhat. So was SOLARIS. Most decidedly Tarkovsky's new film, STALKER, comes within this category.

STALKER is a Russian film, which means that the cultural codes under which it was made - spiritual, philosophical, political - are very different to those under which STAR WARS, for instance, was made. It is not a drama. There is no structure of logically climatic action, which puts the sort of burden upon the characters that would bring Luke Skywalker to his knees in minutes. Of course, there are events, all of which lead to the crux of the film, but they do not have the heavy visual and aural underlinings to be found in western films. The reason for this low key attitude towards action is that it flows from, and is subordinate to, the characters - rather than vice versa, as in most western films. The three characters - all played with subdued authority and conviction by Aleksandr Kaidanovsky as the Stalker, Anatoly Solonitsin as the Writer and Nikolai Grinko as the Professor - are recognisably flesh and blood human beings of today. Perhaps you might not meet them strolling down Oxford street, but if you pricked them you know they would bleed 20th Century red blood. Again there is a contrast with western films. Tarkovsky makes no attempt to create any personal identification on the part of the audience with the characters, either in the sense of heroism or anti-heroism. The observer may feel with them, but it is unlikely that he will feel for them.

This is the distinctive feature of any Tarkovsky film, the presentation of any man, even great men (Andrei Rublev) as men who, to quote Larry Niven and Mrs Bruce Lee, "put their trousers on one leg at a time." Another feature is Tarkovsky's very personal use of colour. This too is alien to the eyes of anyone who has grown up accustomed to the brilliant superclarity and soft focus romanticism of western films. STALKER begins in monochrome, although it is hardly black and white. It is as though everything has been washed in the rain from the city streets and feels chilled to the marrow. Even the buildings look as though they would commit suicide if they just thought it would solve anything. The film returns, eventually, to this colouration once the print has changed to a colour which is almost normal, but not quite; green is tinged by steely blue; red is almost entirely absent - even the air seems to have been strained through peat. Now, this could just be a typical Mos-film print, but it isn't. This is a strange land where everything is close enough to the familiar to be reassuring, and within that tiny difference, lies the fatal potential.

The action, such as it is, takes place in and around a mysterious zone which may or may not be the result of extraterrestrial activity. Within the Zone is a room that has the power to grant a man's most secret wish. This is known abroad and has, naturally, caused something of an influx into the Zone. At this point, however, a Seige Perilous has manifested itself. The Zone is choosy as to who it will accept - the criterion for acceptance being the absence of all hope. Unless the individual permits himself to become tabula rasa (places his trust entirely in the powers of the Zone), he is destroyed. The characters achieve this state, each in his own way. The Stalker himself is a holy fool whose only merit is that he can guide the others through the Zone. The Professor is a pathetic creature stripped of every shred of dignity by the system in which he lives, while the Writer is painfully aware that at the centre of his material success is a spiritual vacuum. These two rational men have difficulty accepting the irrationality of the Zone and more than once their disobedience of the Stalker's instructions nearly kill one and all. Stalker, on the other hand, is a seeming simpleton and accepts what he can see as Fact - no matter how contradictory - and acts accordingly. He has no expectation, except that some day he will die as the result of something that looked and felt familiar.

For an SF film, there is a total lack of hardware; the sum total being a clapped out Land Rover, a rusting railcar and a few tanks mouldering in a watermeadow. When the Zone first appeared, the authorities, as might be expected, tried to destroy it. The Zone gulped down their forces and remained inscrutable. At this contemptuous repulse the technological fix boys went off to sulk in a corner, leaving a cordon sanitaire behind. All manner of parallels may be drawn from



this, indeed, the whole film. Many Western commentators have tried to characterise the film as some dissident epic, to which Tarkovsky himself has replied that they are being too simplistic, naive. Perhaps they forget Tarkovsky's culture is alien to us. What we see as remarkable, he sees as commonplace, although there is plainly as much scope for ambiguity about the man as there is about his film - which is a difficult film. Tarkovsky has made no compromises with his vision, or with the grasshopper attention spans of the modern cinema goer. He clearly expects us to go some way to meet him. The shots are longer than we are used to, and there is a dearth of 'clever' cutting. Not that it is needed. This is a long film with the inexorable pace of a classic English novel. If the scenery, plot and characters are - until the very end - unremittingly depressing, how else could the journey of three men to depths, such that the only way open to them is up, be portrayed?

This is a journey into inner, rather than outer, space. If you think that Heinlein or Zelazny (or Lukas) or any of the action men sf writers, are the bees knees, then avoid this film. You will not enjoy it. On the other hand, if Bradbury, Vonnegut, Brunner and Lem strike chords in your mind, and you can take a numb bum, then gird up your loins and deliver yourself into the hands of a man who is one of the few Great Artists working with film. Much of his vision, and the way he shows it to us, will be alien to you, but once you have discovered the terms of reference then it will, like all aliens, provide immense human rewards.

The ending is quite simply magic.



BESTSELLING PAPERBACKS IN THE UK: ROG PEYTON

FILM & TV NEWS: SIMON BOSTOCK

MEDIA NEWS: ROY MACINSKI

FORTHCOMING BOOKS: JOSEPH NICHOLAS

FROM THE BOOK WORLD: JOSEPH NICHOLAS

OTHER NEWS ITEMS: THE EDITOR

NEWS SOURCE CREDITS: Starlog; Starburst;
Famous Monsters of Filmland; Ansible;
Locus; Science Fiction Review.

BEST SELLING PAPERBACKS IN THE UK

Actually, that title is not really correct as we're only using the figures from ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP. Hopefully if this column is popular, other bookshops can send in their Top Ten best-sellers and all the figures can be correlated, and a more accurate Top Ten should emerge.

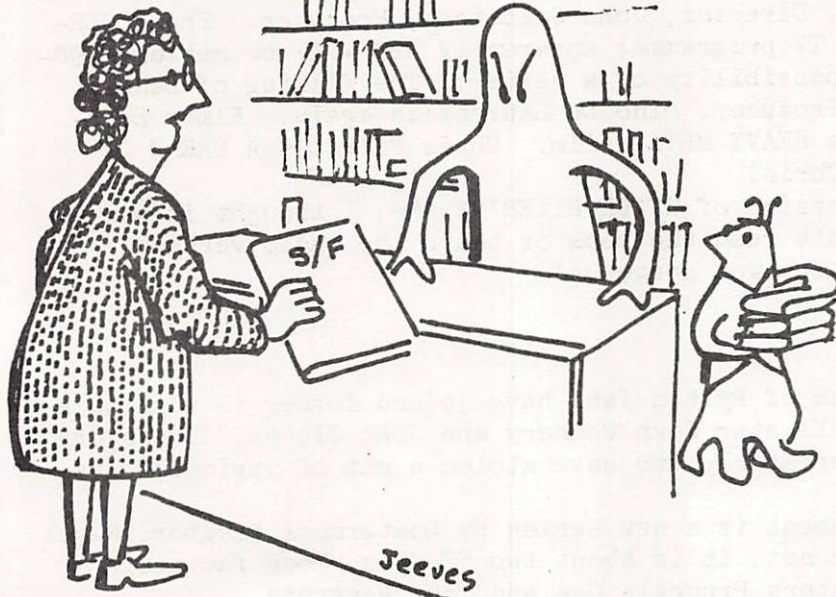
JANUARY

- 1 THE MAGIC LABYRINTH - Philip Jose Farmer (Granada £1.50)
- 2 PLANET OF TREACHERY - E E Doc Smith & Stephen Goldin (Granada £1.25)
- 3 RESTAURANT AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE - Douglas Adams (Pan 95p)
- 4 DR WHO AND THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT - Terrance Dicks (Target 90p)
- 5 HITCH HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY - Douglas Adams (Pan 95p)
- 6 TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO - Philip Jose Farmer (Granada £1.25)
- 7 THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT - Philip Jose Farmer (Granada £1.25)
- 8=THE DARK DESIGN - Philip Jose Farmer (Granada £1.50)
- 8=HAWK THE SLAYER - Terry Marcel & Harry Robertson (NEL £1.00)
- 10 BROTHER TO DEMONS, BROTHER TO GODS - Jack Williamson (Sphere £1.25)

FEBRUARY

- 1 WIZARD - John Varley (Futura £1.75)
- 2 RESTAURANT AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE - Douglas Adams (Pan 95p)
- 3 GOLEM 100 - Alfred Bestee (Pan £1.75)
- 4 DR WHO & THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT - Terrance Dicks (Target 90p)
- 5 GALACTIC WHIRLPOOL - David Gerrold (Transworld £1.25)
- 6=SOVEREIGN - R M Meluch (Arrow £1.35)
- 6=THE MAGIC LABYRINTH - Philip Jose Farmer (Granada £1.50)
- 8 SOMEWHERE IN TIME - Richard Matheson (Sphere £1.25)
- 9 HITCH HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY - Douglas Adams (Pan 95p)
- 10 THE GRAIL WAR - Richard Monaco (Sphere £1.50)

HAVE YOU SOMETHING A
BIT CLOSER TO REALITY?



The big event in January was the first paperback edition of the last volume in the RIVERWORLD series, THE MAGIC LABYRINTH. There were no prizes for guessing this was our best seller in January. As often happens when the last in a series is published, customers often come in and buy the whole set to read in one go - this happened with this series and the re-issues of the first 3 with bold new lettering sold well enough to make the top ten. MAGIC LABYRINTH continued to sell fairly well in February, though the first 3 in the series hardly moved at all.

The 7th in the Family D'Alembert series, making No 2 in January, came as a bit of a surprise as Granada had priced this at £1.25 whereas the previous 6 in the series were all under £1.00. After about 3-4 weeks, sales of this slumped. The publication of RESTAURANT in December was a major event - it was our No 1 with HITCH-HIKER'S at No. 2. They continued to sell well throughout January and February, helped, no doubt, by the TV series.

HAWK THE SLAYER and BROTHER TO DEMONS completed the January set with mediocre sales in a month that is traditionally dead in the book trade. This year was no exception. February normally picks up a bit, but this year there were fewer titles than in previous years. Our top 3 were very close with the sequel to TITAN just edging into first place. RESTAURANT sold well again with GOLEM 100 only one copy behind! The new novel by Bester would have fared better had its packaging been more attractive. I actually wrote to Pan complaining about this cover - I learnt from the reply that Bester had given them a free hand on this with one stipulation - not to use the cover that appeared on the US editions and the UK hardcover. There's no accounting for taste....

The re-appearance of the Gerrold STAR TREK novel two months after publication is because Transworld bought far too few copies over from America - they sold out by publication date - and we managed to obtain a quantity to fill outstanding orders (we still couldn't get enough!).

Good cover artwork obviously helped to put the first novel by R M Meluch in our Top Ten - Arrow are coming up with some superb covers lately.

The film tie-in edition of SO EWHERE IN TIME made No. 8 on copies sold - it would have been number 2 if we'd counted outstanding orders - the book went out of print in mid-February! Annoying but very pleasing that a superb book is selling well generally.

Richard Monaco's second book in his trilogy completes the February set - published a month after Futura remaindered the first in the trilogy.

If any other specialist bookshops wish to send in their Top Ten each month, I'll be glad to incorporate the figures. Remember, they must be official UK published/distributed titles only - no unofficial imports. Send this to me at ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP 57 Summer Row Birmingham B3 1JJ, or phone it through to (021) 236 1112. Your shop will, of course, be credited.

FILM & TV NEWS:

Another batch of news; slightly less this time because I haven't had the chance to buy a lot of media magazines - I've been stocking up on books. Anyway, on with it: The main news is that of CONAN. The new film that is. Filming has already begun in Spain, with Arnold Schwarzeneger in the role of the one and only barbarian, while other secured actors include Max Von Sydow (who was Ming, of course) - get's around, doesn't he? , and James Earl Jones. Also, by coincidence, the producer is Dino De Laurentiis, also of FLASH GORDON fame. The budget is a massive \$20,000,000 and, as usual, it's a story of both Conan and Thulsa Doom (Max Von Sydow??). Lastly, the production is set to end in June. And the premier will be in March '82.

Films that may come to the UK: SPACE VAMPIRES...CLASH OF THE TITANS(just completed, it is in a similar vein to JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS)...PSYCHO 11 (another sequel)...THE ENTITY...HEART-BEEPS...BLADE RUNNER (which is the title chosen for the adaptation of Dick's 'Do Androids dream

of Electric Sheep? - of course!)...THE DROWNED WORLD (Ballard)...VIRUS (a \$17,000,000 Japanese film starring Glen Ford and Chuck Connors (knock off the 'S' and what do you get?!)) which has been cut down drastically for an American reception)...HARLEQUIN (could it be an adaptation of the Harlan Ellison tale?)...THE TIME BANDITS...and CATAclysm.

Finally, the bits and bobs department: THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW sequel is called SHOCK TREATMENT; Jim Sharman, Director; John Goldstone, Producer. The RIVER-WORLD series by Farmer may become a TV programme; apparently ABC will be making a 90-minute pilot film, with the slight possibility of a series. The filming of DUNE should begin near the end of '81: Producer, Dino De Laurentiis again. Elmer Bernstein is composing the music for the HEAVY METAL film. Chris Priest's A DREAM OF WESSEX is to be filmed - Congrats, Chris!

What did you think of the TV version of HITCH-HIKER'S? Me, I thought it was quite good, though I confess I haven't read the book or heard the radio version. Liked Zaphod's second head and Trillion was gorgeous!

MEDIA NEWS:

Michael Palin and Terry Gilliam of Python fame have joined forces to work on a new film called TIME BANDITS: it will star Sean Connery and John Cleese. The story is about a small boy who meets six creatures who have stolen a map of various holes in time and space.

In production at LWT at the moment is a new series by Quatermass creator, Nigel Kneale, called KINVIG; believe it or not, it is about two SF fans whose fantasies start to come to life. The series stars Prunella Gee and Tony Haygrath.

Just who do Universal think they are kidding? The first episode of the new series of BATTLESTAR GALACTICA being shown on TV at the moment, was padded out with clips from Douglas Trumbull's SILENT RUNNING. And talking of Douglas, ...after a gap of nearly ten years he gets his second shot at the role of director. The film in question is MGM's \$16 million BRAINSTORM.

Over at ITC, Lord Lew is planning a film called THE DARK CRYSTAL. Producers on the film are Gary Kurtz and Frank Oz (yes, Oz of the Muppets).

Watch out for a film called DEATHWATCH. Shot in and around Glasgow, it is Director Bertrand Tavernier's first English language film. Set in the near future, it stars Harvey Keitel as an obsessive reporter covering a very rare event - a person's death. It will be released by Contemporary, so it is likely to get only a very limited distribution.

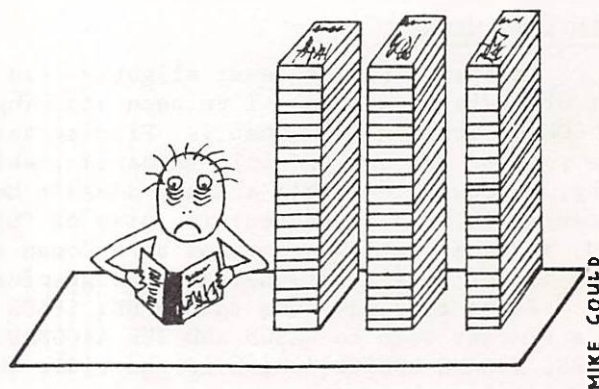
Looks like Ray Bradbury is a big name in Hollywood these days: he's involved in a number of up-and-coming projects. The first is a proposed sequel to THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, made by Twentieth Century Fox - Bradbury has supplied two or three story outlines. The second is a production for Disney of Bradbury's SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES; producer will be Kirk Douglas and, although no official announcement has been made, Bradbury said some time ago that the only director he would work with was Spielberg.

Meanwhile, back at ITC, the TV version of DAN DARE has been put on the shelf for a year due to financial problems. Well, if they will go making films like SATURN 3 and RAISE THE TITANIC.....

FORTHCOMING BOOKS:

SIDGWICK + JACKSON: Norman Spinrad - SONGS FROM THE STARS (March, £6.95); Joan Vinge - FIRESHIP/ MOTHER AND CHILD (March, £6.95); Joan Vinge - THE OUTCASTS OF HEAVEN BELT (January, £6.95); Gene Wolfe - THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER (March, £7.95); Clifford D. Simak - THE VISITORS (January, £7.95). (The Simak and the second of the Vinges have, of course, already appeared.)

PAN: Robert Silverberg - THE SONGS OF SUMMER (April, £1.25); not a new collection at all, really, more of a random assemblage of stories from very early collections, few of them of much interest or worth.



VIRGIN: Michael Moorcock -THE GREAT ROCK'N'ROLL SWINDLE (March, £1.25); proper paperback edition of the hack novel "inspired" by the movie of the same name, first published in tabloid newspaper form last year. If I can summon up the energy to actually look beyond its ghastly cover, it may be reviewed in the next INFERNO....

WEBB + BOWER: David Langford and Chris Morgan - FACTS AND FALLACIES IN THE NAME OF SCIENCE (June, £5.95); compendium of (in retrospect) daft or just plain wrong predictions and mis-statements - like, for instance, Bishop Usher's "calculation" that the Earth was created just after breakfast on Sunday 25 October 4004BC, and the categorical denunciation of the possibility of powered, manned flight by Simon Newcomb, the American Astronomer General, three years after the Wright brothers' first flight.... Colin Wilson and John Grant - THE DIRECTORY OF POSSIBILITIES (June, £8.95); "an alphabetical directory of all those areas on the fringes of knowledge", it says here - given Wilson's involvement, it's likely to be as loony as hell, but

SPHERE: Dave Langford's WAR IN 2080 is now slated for publication on 23 April - after YORCON 2, of course, but copies will nevertheless be on sale at the convention to those attending. Apparently advertisements are planned for the Sunday Times, no less. THE RIMS OF SPACE: A. Bertram Chandler (7 May '81, £1.25). Michale Matheson - WHAT DREAMS MAY COME (21 May, £1.50).

GRANADA: Two Moorcock Reprints - THE SAILOR ON THE SEAS OF FATE (June, 95p) and THE WARLORD OF THE AIR (June, 95p).

HAMYLN: John Brunner - TIMES WITHOUT NUMBER (May).

NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY: Robot A. Henliner - THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST (out now, £2.25); hundreds upon hundreds of pages of people talking at each other to no purpose and no effect (apart from that of numbing the reader's brain); the publicity blurb which accompanied the review copy refers to it as "unabridged", which seems to me to suggest that the US edition might have been....but who cares? Heinlein is without doubt one of SF's most overrated writers, a pompous and self-serving hack whose greatest appeal is to those too young to have any experience of the real world and don't mind being lectured at by someone supposedly older and wiser than they, and whom they think might thus be able to teach them something useful about the said real world; but the world about which Heinlein preaches is one which exists solely inside his own head and the so-called "rules" which he propounds are completely anathema to any civilised society. THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST is without doubt one of the worst SF novels the world has ever known.

NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY: Hank Stine - THE PRISONER: A DAY IN THE LIFE (out now, £1.25); a sequel to Tom Disch's earlier THE PRISONER, but nowhere near as good.

PENGUIN: Walter Wangerin, Jr., - THE BOOK OF THE DUN COW (April, £1.25).
FROM THE BOOK WORLD

Ed Bryant, a professional writer of small output and one of the organisers of the DENVENTION 2 Worldcon, has a novel (title as yet unknown) in preparation for Pocket Books; a new short story collection, PARTICLE THEORY - including his tediously unimaginative and atrociously written Hugo and Nebula winning story GIANTS (and with a title like that, you're probably as tediously unimaginative as he if you can't guess what it's all about) - is shortly to be published.

George R. R. Martin has a mainstream novel, FEVER DREAM, coming out from Pocket Books sometime this year, and is working on an SF novel for them; his Hugo and Nebula winning "Sandkings" has been optioned for the cinema.

Doris Pitkin Buck, author of many short stories published in F + SF in the late fifties and early sixties, has died of a pulmonary embolism, aged 82. Other people who have recently kicked it are Susan C. Petrey, who had just begun appearing in the same magazine; her latest story is, in fact, published in the April 1981 issue, and the editorial introduction to it states that they have one more story from her in their

inventory. And, just to extend the F+SF-authors-die coincidence further, Compton N. Crook, who wrote a series of routine space adventures about an exploratory vessel called the "Stardust" for it under the pseudonym of Stephen Tall, has also recently handed in his notice on life. Bizarre, eh wot?

Gene Roddenberry has announced that plans are under way to get STAR TREK back on to TV, this time as a 90-minute to 2-hour show, and all apparently as a result of the success of the movie. Gosh, I thought it had been generally condemned as a total flop....

I, ROBOT is now set to go at Warner Brothers; it will be directed by Irving (as in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK) Kirshner from a script by Harlan Ellison, said script being apparently based on ideas contained in the said short story collection and having a plot all its own, concerned mainly with two humans - called, as per the stories, Powell and Donovan - travelling around the galaxy delivering robots to all and sundry. Thus the naïvete of white male Caucasian pro-technological values is allowed to continue its domination of all other cultural modes

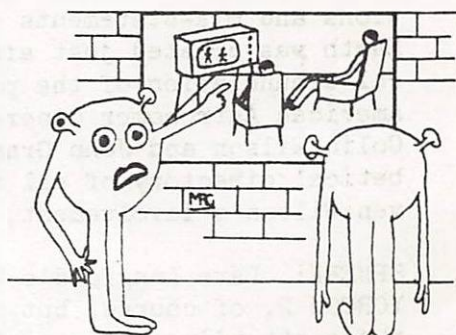
Isaac Asimov's so-called "classic" story "Nightfall" is being developed for the screen by Roger Corman's New World Pictures. (This, you will recall, is the same outfit that brought you THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN IN SPACE, otherwise more correctly known as BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS.) The budget is said to be set at between \$5 and \$7 million.

In Sweden, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK has been banned for children under 15 on the grounds that it's "too violent and too frightening". Jesus! Now maybe if Han Solo had done more than merely kiss Princess Leia....well, such would have added an extra dimension to the movie's cardboard heroics, wouldn't it?

Columbia Pictures' top management are rumoured to be plotting a movie to be called CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE FOURTH KIND, all about sexual contact between humans and aliens. I don't believe it....but if it is true then, bearing in mind that A.E. Van Vogt won a large amount of money from Twentieth Century Fox for purely accidental similarities between their ALIEN and parts of his "Black Destroyer" and "Discord in Scarlet", Columbia had better buy the rights to James Tiptree's "And I Awoke And Found Me Here On The Cold Hill's Side" now, because it's a story about exactly that sort of sexual contact and they could well get right royally done for plagiarism if they don't.

OTHER NEWS

Times are hard in the SF Book World. DOUBLEDAY, the largest publisher of hardcover SF in the US has cut its line from two to one title per month (since they have a 14-month "year", this means a cut of 14). Declining sales are blamed. PENGUIN Books seems to have more or less abandoned publishing SF - at least no news is available of any forthcoming books from them. You will recall (or some people will) from M33 that SAVOY Books went bust. Apparently Dark They Were bought up large stocks of Savoy Books - in particular the CHARLES PLATT INTERVIEWS, which they are selling for £1.75 - worth it, as you may not be able to find a copy soon. Hot on the heels of the Savoy collapse, PIERROT Publishing has gone bust - in rather a spectacular way. Estimates of the debts range from £3-400,000 with writer Rob Holdstock and Freelance TV addict/fan Malcolm Edwards being stung for £5,000. Pierrot's Books were sold via contract to NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY in England. It is rumoured that the Company's head, Philip Dunn, discovered mysticism, joined an obscure religious sect called the Orange People, split to India with his girlfriend, and left his wife and family to answer the creditors.



"Beating them should be easy. They spend most of their time watching dwarves running about in a box."

And, speaking of mysticism, or rather brainwashing, the SCIENTOLOGY cult have been active on the mailing front. I reckon they must have access to the BSFA mailing list (which one of you is it??) - since Roelof Goudriaan tells me that he has received their 'literature' in Holland. I have also received their stuff, and so have several other fans. Readers are WARNED that their organisation has been widely accused of authoritarian attitudes, indoctrination, hypnotising, brainwashing and destroying family relationships. Their 'Guru', L. Ron Hubbard, was, of course, an SF writer in the thirties/forties. They are mailing from an address in Manchester - you have been warned! Maybe they'll do a "Moonies/Daily Mail" on MATRIX?

Readers are asked NOT to write to Ralph Stokes at Hamlyn Paperbacks, Banda House, Cambridge Grove, London W6 OLE in connection with the British Edition of Jim Baen's DESTINIES; although the \$1/4 million advance for the first 8 was paid to ACE in full by Walter Clare when he bought them, it wouldn't be kind to embarrass Mr Stokes by enquiring about them, would it?

Equally, it wouldn't be kind to embarrass ANSIBLE editor Dave Langford by saying that he has published erroneous information to the effect that WORLD SF is "struggling"; the problem is an "administrative one" - WORLD SF is in no difficulties, I am reliably informed.

The GUFF race has been won by Joseph Nicholas (47 votes) from Malcom Edwards (24 votes); Platform 5, Waterloo, Surrey Limpwritsts, and Blue Streak tailed, narrowly, all receiving one vote! Congrats to Joe and best wishes to him on his trip to Australia in June for ADVENTION. If you can contribute anything to the GUFF fund, please contact U.K. administrator, Rob Jackson. Other fan funds - rumours of likely candidates for TAFF are circulating, from as far away as Wenton Harrow and Bingley, West Yorkshire; subtle hints also coming from Gannet Fandom (still alive).

Penguin Books are offering £750 for the George Orwell Memorial Prize - for an article, essay, or series of articles commenting on current cultural, social or political issues. The work must have appeared in a newspaper, periodical or pamphlet in 1980. Details from Barbara Buckley, National Book League, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ.

Charles Platt, \$135,000 richer after selling an historical novel series to Warner, claims that, since he never wants to be rich, he plans to spend the money on a project dear to his heart - he plans to hire "someone" to run a hard-hitting, "idealistic" SF Review magazine. Maybe he'll hire the BSFA?

CONVENTION LISTINGS:

Should you want your Convention listed, please provide me with full details, including Progress Reports, etc. (Editor.)

YORCON II: 17-20 April 1981. The British Eastercon. GoH: Ian Watson and Thomas M. Disch. Fan GoH: Dave Langford. Rates: Attending, £6.00; Supporting, £3.00. Hotel accommodation: Dragonara, LEEDS. Progress Report 4 now out, with Hotel Booking forms. For further details, phone me on Leeds 721478.

STAR ONE '81: One day Con at The Wembley Conference Centre for Blake's Seven Fans. £5.00; from 2.00pm-10.30pm. Apply 21 Hargwyn Street Stockwell SW9 9RQ (SAE).

FANTASYCON 7: 10-12 July 1981 at The Grand Hotel, Birmingham. Supporting membership £1.00. This is The British Fantasy Society's Convention. Details from Mike Chinn, 1 Buttery Road Smethwick Warley West Midlands.

FAIRCON '81: 24-27 July 1981 at the Ingram Hotel, Glasgow. GoH John Brunner. Special Guest, Ken Slater. Membership: Supporting, £4.00 (£5.00 after Easter). Attending, £8.00, going up to £9.00, and then £10.00 on the day. Details from: 200 Woodlands Road Glasgow G3 6LN (SAE).

CONTD. Page 30



The main item in this issue's column is the new club directory. It is reproduced after some longer pieces on the group at Imperial College and the Birmingham SF Film Society, and a few pieces of news. If anybody manages to read through it all, you're invited to write in and tell me about the worst moments of your experience. I usually try (though according to some letters to the editor I don't always succeed) to make LIFE ON MARS readable, but I'm sure you understand that including the directory makes such a task even more difficult than usual.

Still, the list is the result of the eighteen months' work I've put into the clubs job and, although I say it myself, I think it goes a long way to providing a comprehensive list of the clubs in Britain, and to providing the kind of club information that the BSFA should be able to offer. And if your group's not mentioned, or you want to provide further news about your group, then all you have to do, of course, is to write in and tell me.

Thanks to everyone that's already done that - most of you are mentioned above as people to contact, but I'd also like to thank all the other people who've helped me over the last few months while I've been putting the directory together, i.e., by replying to my letters. LIFE ON MARS depends on your co-operation. Tell me about the guest speaker who came last meeting, the quiz you ran last week, your problems in finding somewhere to meet or in producing a fanzine, the convention you're hoping to run, what your group thinks about the BSFA, who spilt the most beer last week. . . Use your imagination. I'd just like to hear from you. My address is at the end of the article.

+ + + Eunice Pearson has written to tell me about the brand new Birmingham Polytechnic Science Fiction and Fantasy Society. For details, see the directory.

+ + + Naveed Khan phoned up to say that he and Michael Phillips are planning to start a new group in Wigan (to be named after George Orwell, perhaps?). For details, contact Naveed. The address I have for him is Traherne Hall, Llwyn-y-Grant Rd, Penylan, CARDIFF CF 3 7UX, which you will probably have noticed isn't in Wigan. Naveed lives in Wigan, but goes to Cardiff University (I think). He also reports that the Cardiff Group, along with president Lionel Fanthorpe, are planning a convention for this November. It will probably be called CUMRICON and the guests of honour may well be Ian Watson and Brian Stableford.

+ + + Two members are looking for groups in their area. First, Ian Goffin is looking for a group in Sheffield. I know there used to be one which was organised from the Sheffield Space Centre, but that has now changed hands so the group may have folded? Can anybody help? Ian lives at 19 Edgewell Crescent, Foxhill, Sheffield S6 1FG. Also - Eddie Bundred wants to find a group in the Liverpool area. If you can help on that one, write to Eddie at 81 Grandison Road, LIVERPOOL, L4 9SU. Of course, if you live in Liverpool or Sheffield and don't know of a group but would like to attend one, you could try writing to Eddie or Ian. Perhaps you could get one started.

+ + + Michael Ashley tells me there's a group meeting in Lancaster. Some details next issue, I hope.

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION FILM SOCIETY

One person who's written in with lots of info is Dave Holmes. The bare facts about the group are listed above in the directory, cunningly inserted under "BIRMINGHAM" but I thought I'd let you know what films are coming in the next few months: 3 May MAROONED and VOYAGE TO THE END OF THE UNIVERSE; 7 June, CHARLY and FANTASTIC PLANET.

Recent films have included SILENT RUNNING, WAR OF THE WORLDS, JASON & THE ARGONAUTS, GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD, BARBARELLA and DANGER DIABOLIK.

Dave writes that the group was formed in early 1980 as a sister organisation to the Brum Group and "ended the year without losing money". They have a membership to match the Brum Group itself and it covers a wide area of the Midlands. (Numerous members of the Leicester SF Group come in convoy each month.) Dave continues: "The most surprising thing that we have noticed is that we are appealing to a whole new audience. Many of our members have been able to recruit new faces for the Brum Group. This success is encouraging us to diversify. We are planning social evenings, and hope later in the year to have a trip to Elstree Studios. However, the major development for 1981 is FILMCON 81 [see the convention listings for further details]."

IMPERIAL COLLEGE SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY (I.C.S.F. Soc)

Martin Jeffcock has written to correct my belief that Steve Higgins was the founding father of this group. "Since he's bound to write to you with a cynical view of our activities" says Martin, "I'm sending you this fact-packed letter to hopefully give you a more balanced view." Over to you, Martin.

"The group was originally started in 1976 and appeared to have been fairly active in that year, unfortunately whoever ran the society then left (we'd love to know who it was) and since, it has been showing approx five B-graded SF films per year to a few students and not having any outside interests.

"This year's ruling group organised a bloodless (i.e., totally unopposed) coup last Easter and took control. Admittedly, due to union cutting of our grant due to our previous inactivity, we're only likely to show seven films this year but they're either better known: ROLLERBALL, THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW; undeservedly passed over: QUINTET; or chosen deliberately for their sheer appallingness: SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS."

The group attends the BSFA RUTLAND ARMS meetings every month (hooray, hooray) and about ten members are going to YORCON 2 and UNICON 2 (under such guises as John Dillenger and Malaclypse the Elder, I seem to remember. It's a hard life as a membership sec. Do you put Howard the Dolphin under H for Howard or D for Dolphin?). Apparently, the group may be presenting a few hours of alternative programming at UNICON 2.

For further details about ICSF Soc, write to Martin at the address I've given in the directory. You'll also find details of their regular meetings there. Thanks for writing, Martin.

I've just got space to mention that Bernard Earp has got the Bolton Group mentioned in the monthly WHAT'S ON IN BOLTON, which seems like a good bit of free advertising. Maybe other groups could try something similar - i.e., advertise in your local WHAT'S ON guide, not necessarily the Bolton one.

So that's it. As I say, back to normal next issue, with a fantastically exciting column. But only if you write to me of course . . . Simon Ounsley, 13A Cardigan Rd., Headingley, LEEDS LS6 3AE.

ABERDEEN

Aberdeen University Union SF Society

Contact William Goodall c/o Aberdeen University Union, Broad Street, ABERDEEN AB9 1AW. Film shows, a library and a fanzine called RING PULL.

BELFAST

Belfast SF Group

Contact Graham Andrews at 53 Columbia Street, Belfast, N. Ireland, BT13 3HL or phone at BELFAST 754919. An informal group. President is James White.

BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham Science Fiction Group

Celebrating its tenth anniversary this July, the Brum Group meets on the third Friday of each month at the IVY BUSH in EDGBASTON - guest speakers at each meeting. Also, informal gatherings on the first Tuesday of each at WILLIE'S WINE BAR next to the Andromeda Bookshop in Summer Row. The group produces a monthly newsletter and organises the annual NOVACON convention. Full details from Margaret Thorpe at 36 Tryford Road, Ward End, BIRMINGHAM 8.

Birmingham Science Fiction Film Society

Films are shown on the first Sunday of each month at the Arta Lab Cinema, Holt St, Birmingham. Doors open 10-30 am! Membership costs £5 for twelve performances and £3 for six. Tickets then cost £1-25 for members. The group produces a regular newsletter and is organising a film convention this November. Contact either David Holmes, 28 Grosvenor Avenue, Streetly, West Midlands or Chris Smith, 49 Humber Tower, Francis Street, Birmingham, West Midlands B7 4JX. (More details on the con and forthcoming films later in this column).

Birmingham Polytechnic Science Fiction and Fantasy Society

A brand new group which meets every other Tuesday somewhere on the Costa Green site. For details contact Brian Richardson via the Student Union office.

BOLTON

Bolton SF Group

Meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month at the OLD THREE CROWNS in Deanegate. For details contact Bernard Earp at 21 Moorfield Grove, Tonge Moor, BOLTON BL2 2LQ. (more news from Bernard later in this column)

BRIGHTON

Brighton SF Group

A new, informal group. Contact David Penn at 23 Queens Approach, Uckfield, Sussex, TN22 1RU. Regular monthly meetings.

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University SF Society (CUSFS)

Contact Pete Hutchinson at Jesus College, Cambridge. Weekly Thursday meetings at the HORSE & GROOM, King Street, Cambridge. Library of 3000 books - borrowing open to members.

CARDIFF

Cardiff SF Group

Fortnightly meetings (usually on Sundays) and usually in the Students Union in Park Place, but best to contact Tony Donovan at 29 Llanbleddian Gardens, Cathays, CARDIFF CF2 4AT. (Tel CARDIFF 372490 or 43474 during office hours) or the president, Lionel Fanthorne at CARDIFF 408368. Convention planned.

THE 1981 CLUB DIRECTORY

CROYDON Science Fiction and Fantasy Club

In spite of my remarks last issue, this is apparently a well-established group. Meetings on the last Friday of each month at the TAVERN IN THE TOWN in Croydon and on the second Friday of each month at the Railway Tavern in Purley. For details, contact John Hunt at 39 Stoneyfield Road, Coulsdon, Surrey. Tel. DOWNLAND 55262.

DUNDEE

'42' - Dundee SF Society

Contact Alison Wallace at 21 Charleston St, DUNDEE DD2 4RG. Informal meetings and a fanzine.

EDINBURGH

F.O.R.T.H. (Friends of Robert-the-Back)

Contact Jim Darroch at 21 Coralet Road, Currie, Midlothian, EH14 5LZ. Weekly Tuesday meetings in back lounge bar of MATHER'S on Broughton Street (after 7-45 pm) near Eastern Scottish bus station and five minutes walk from Waverley railway station. Excellent pint of Younger's IPA. Fanzine called RA BRIG (which compared to most club zines is excellent) from the above address, for the usual or 50p. Meetings "very informal".

EXETER

University of Exeter Science Fiction Society

Contact UESFS, Societies Rack, Devonshire House, University of Exeter, Exeter, Devon. Regular Monday night meetings in the union bar from 8pm. Occasional special events and a fanzine called EXOSPHERE. Three hundred volume library.

GLASGOW

FOKT (Friends of Kilgore Trout)

Large weekly Thursday night meetings in the lounge of Wintergills Bar, Great Western Road, Glasgow, from about 8pm. The group organises the annual FAIRCON convention and produces a fanzine called FOKT. Encompasses several special interest groups, one of which - the "cretins" - produces the fanzine DRYGULCH, which in one sense of the word is the most fannish zine in Britain today, in that it contains the largest number of in-jokes. Contact address for FOKT is PHOTON BOOKS, WOODLANDS Rd, GLASGOW. Tel. 041 333 0784.

Glasgow University Science Fiction Society

Contact Henry Balen at 69 Cattlehill Drive, Newton Mearns, GLASGOW G77 5LB.

HARROW SF Group

Contact Pete Wright at 12 Elm Road, Faringdon, Oxon SW7 7EJ.

HIGH WYCOMBE

High Wycombe SF Group

Meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month at THE ROUNDABOUT (rear bar) in Bridge Street, High Wycombe. Contact Chris Lewis at 4 Southfield Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 5LA.

HULL University SF Society

Contact SF Soc, Students Union, Hull University. Meetings every Tuesday night on the top floor of the union building from about 7-30 pm. If you're not a student, get there before 8pm or you'll need to be signed in.

KEELE University SF Society

Regular meetings in the students union. Details from Jan Huxley c/o Students Union, Keele University, Newcastle, Staffs, ST5 5BJ. JWCOW 2 convention to be held Sept 11th - 14th with guests of honour John Sladek and Alan Dorey (£5-50 attending, £3-00 supporting membership to Chris Davenport, "Bridge End", Shawbury, Shrewsbury, Salop.)

LEEDS

Leeds SF Group

Weekly Friday night meetings in back room of WEST RIDING, Wellington St, near railway and National coach stations. Darts, dominoes, politics, philosophy etc. Organising YORCON2 Eastercon. Contact Simon Dunale, 13A Cardigan Rd, Readingley, LEEDS LS6 3AE.

Leeds University SF Society

Weekly Wednesday night meetings in the PACK HORSE, Woodhouse Lane, near the university. Library and fanzine called BLACK HOLE. Going through sticky patch at present. Large influx of energetic geniuses welcomed.

LEICESTER SF Group

Contact Janet Hunt, 54 Foxaunter Drive, Oadby, LEICESTER LE2 5FE. Meetings at the OLD BLACK SWAN, Belgrave Gate, Leicester on the first Friday of each month at 7-30 pm. A talk or other event at every meeting. Book, tape and video libraries. Plans for a convention in 1982.

LONDON

BSFA

The BSFA's very own monthly meetings, established as long ago as last October, on the third Friday of each month at the RUTLAND HOTEL, Hammersmith. Time - about 8pm. A sensational event at every meeting. Contact Alan Dorey at 64 Hartford Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middx. (tel. 01-902-8876 X211 daytime)

Imperial College Science Fiction Society

Contact Martin Jeffcock c/o Physics Dept, Imperial College, LONDON SW7. Weekly Friday lunchtime meetings above Stan's Bar in the college residence halls. "The usual activity tends to be the exchanging of books in the society's library (approx 300 of varying quality) and general exchange of news". Plus film nights, a fanzine called PERIHELION and a planned H.G.Wells picnic (1). (More details incl. Steve Higgins denunciation later in the column).

MANCHESTER and District (MaD) Group

Informal meetings on the first and third Wednesday of each month at the William Shakespeare pub, just behind Lewis's.

UMIST SF Society

Contact c/o Students Union, UMIST, PO Box 88, Sackville Street, MANCHESTER M60 1QD. Library and fanzine GROK?

NORWICH

Norwich Science Fiction Group

Contact Glen Warminger, 72 Linacre Drive, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 8PQ. Meetings every Wednesday at the Louis Marchesi pub, Tombland. A variety of events and activities, including a clubzine called ONCEZINE.

OXFORD University Science Fiction Group

Contact Dave Strong c/o Wadham College, Oxford. Sunday night meetings at the BULLDOG BAR, St Aldgates, preceded by library meetings at Worcester College at 8-15 pm. Ask at the Porter's Lodge for Peter Cohen or the Oxford University SF Group.

READING

Glomerule - The Reading SF (Reading) Group

Name is subject to philosophical argument. Contact Dave Langford at 22 Northumberland Avenue, READING, Berks, RG2 7PW. Meetings on the third Thursday of each month in the lounge bar of the Osborne Arms. 7-30 to 8-00 pm onwards.

SALISBURY SF Group

Regular monthly meetings with quizzes and stuff. Contact Roger Whittington at 91 Milford Hill, Salisbury, Wilts.

SOLIHULL - Solihull SF Group

Meetings on the second Friday of each month at a Solihull pub. For details, contact Steven J Green at 11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7SD.

SPACE

ASTRA (Association in Scotland to Research into Astronautics)

Don't really meet in space but would probably like to. The main object of the society is 'to stimulate and further public interest in all aspects of space research and all related subjects' by lectures, discussions, book projects and exhibitions. Meetings every Saturday afternoon from 2-30 pm on the first floor, 49 Almda St, Hamilton, Lanarkshire, "above the Kentucky Fried Chicken". Also - Astronomical Section meets every Friday evening from 7-30 pm in Airdale Public Library. For full details contact Duncan Lunan, c/o A Graeme Adam (Solicitor), 158A, High Street, Irvine, Ayrshire. Tel IRVINE (0294)72350

STOUR VALLEY

Stour Valley SF Group

Contact Alex Stewart, 11A Beverley Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3NG.

SWANSEA

Swansea SF Society

Contact Linda Thomas, 113 Heathfield, Swansea, West Glamorgan, SA1 6EL tel. 54335. Twice-weekly meetings and a fanzine REDSHIFT.

ST ALBANS (yes, I suppose T should come before W - never mind)

Staffen

Contact Mic Rogers 'Pohutukawas', 22 Campfield Rd, St Albans, Herts. Meetings at the PEACOCK, Hatfield Rd, On the second Monday of each month at 8pm.

WARWICK

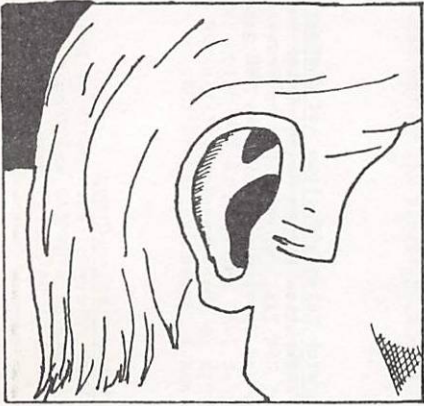
University of Warwick Science Fiction and Fantasy Society

Contact at Arts Federation Pigeon Holes, Union Building, University of Warwick, COVENTRY CV4 7AL. D&D meetings on Wednesday afternoons (small games collection and developing their own D&D game) - SF meetings on Thursday evening at 7-30 pm. Both in the union building. SF meetings feature events such as guest speakers, films and quizzes. Book and fanzine library and a fanzine called FUSION.

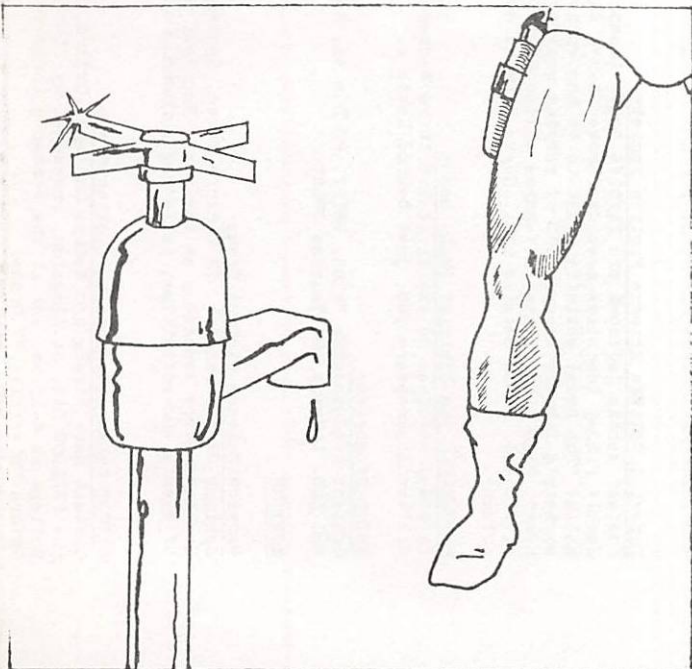
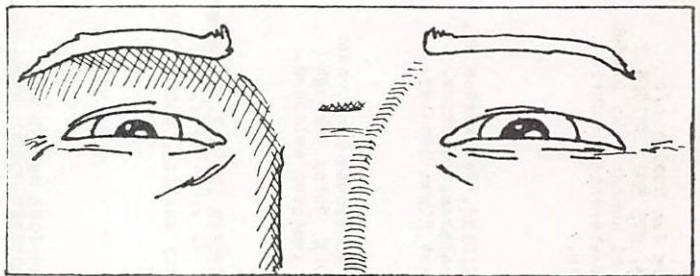
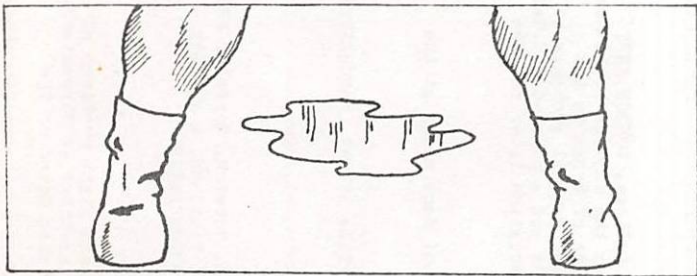
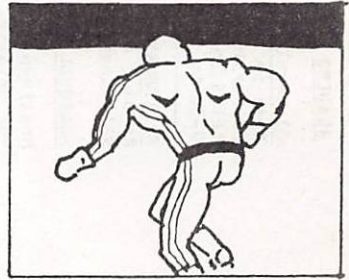
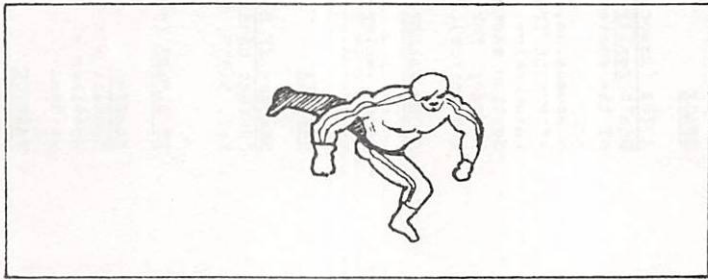
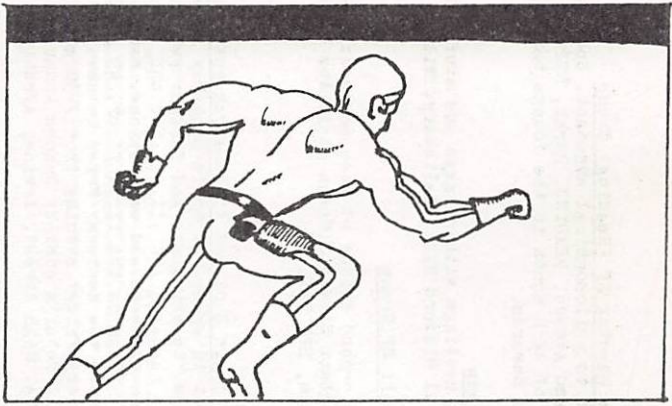
WEST MIDLANDS Science Fiction Group

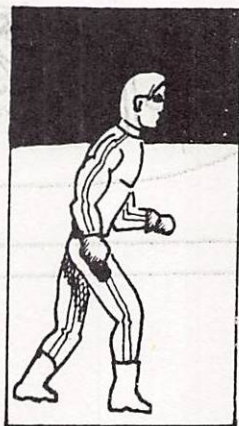
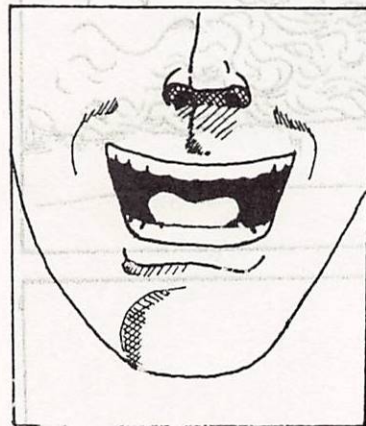
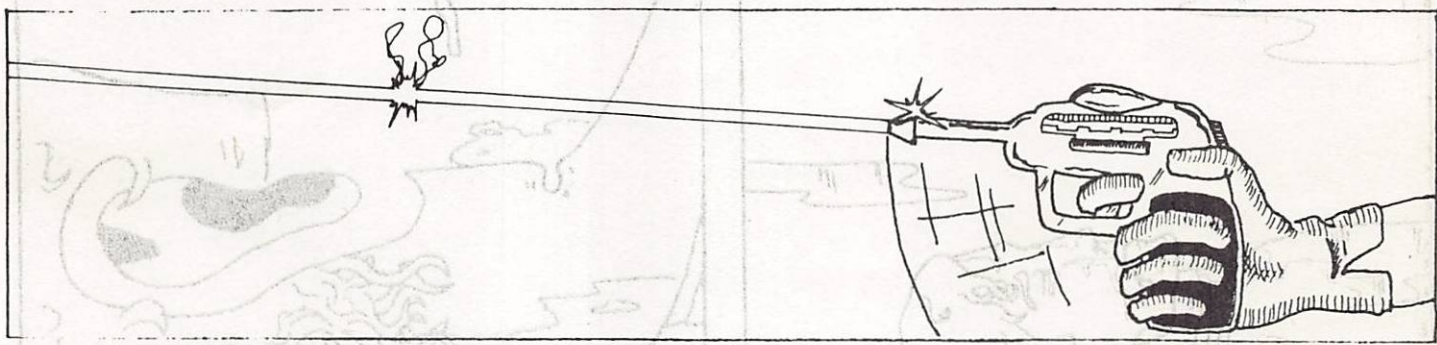
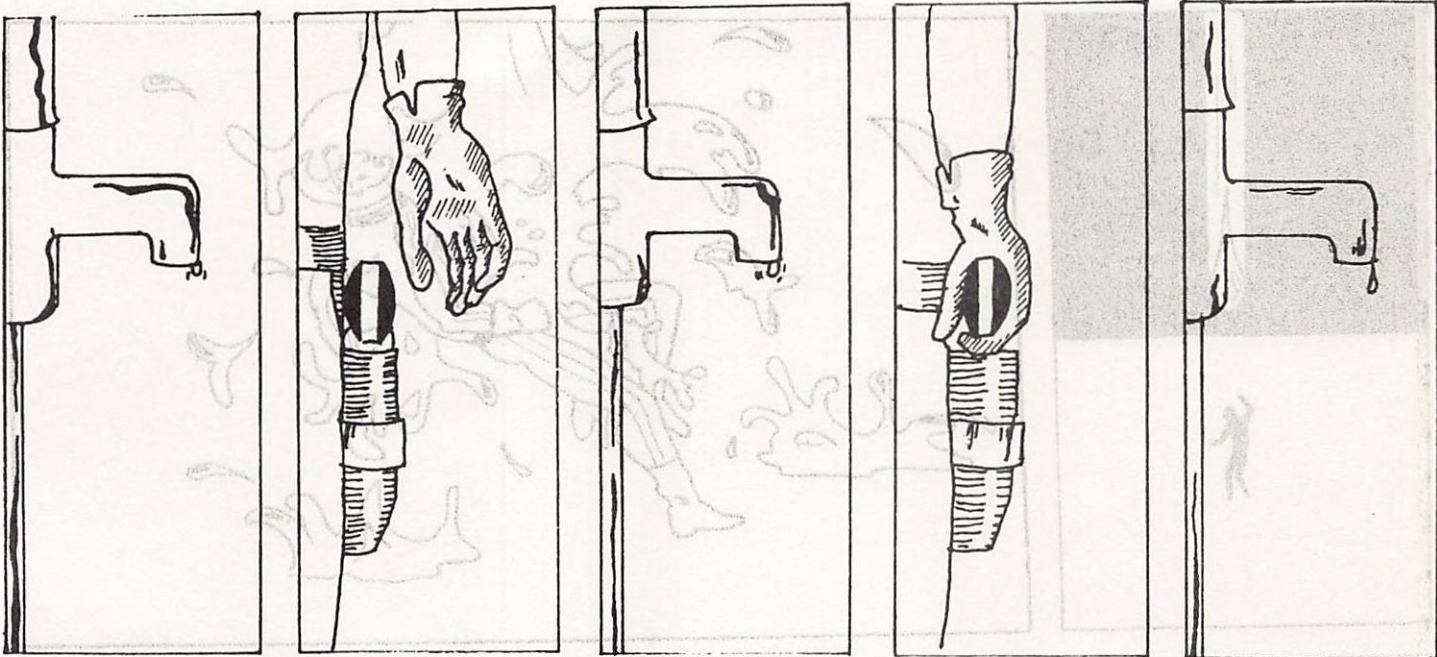
Meetings on the last Friday of each month at the GEORGE & DRAGON, Ryder Street, Wordsley. Fanzine EVENSTAR and frequent news-sheet LASERHEART. Contact Geoff Boswell at 59 Sorrel Walk, Stour View, Brierley Hill.

PLINK!

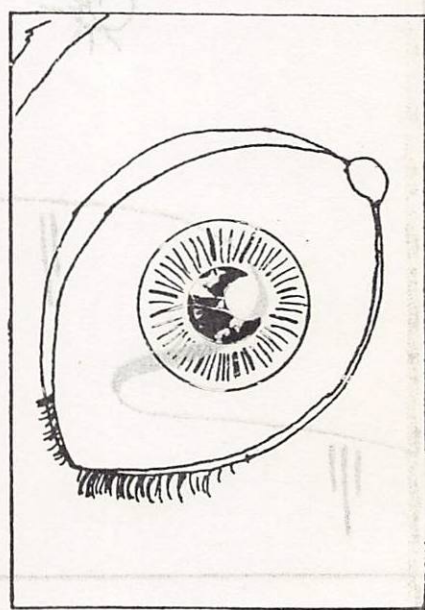


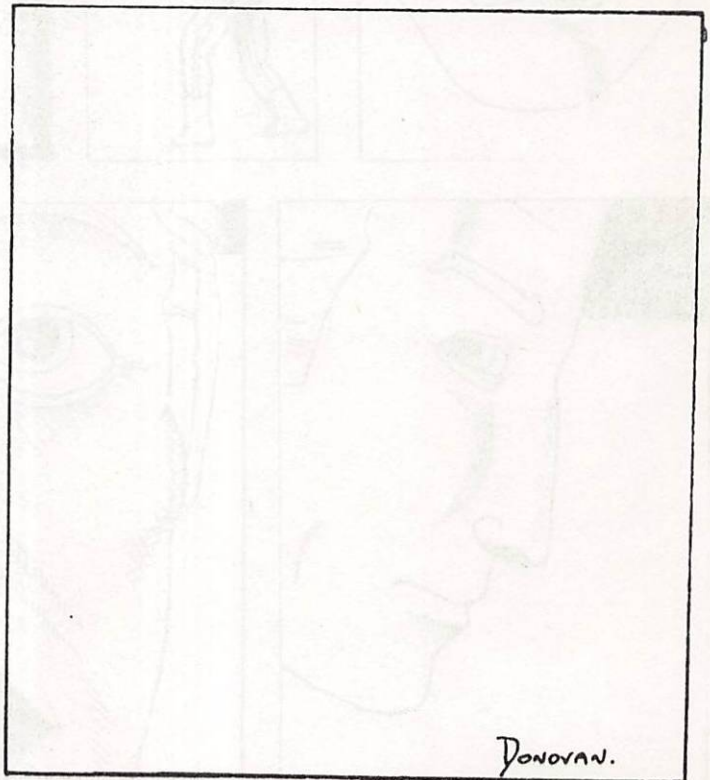
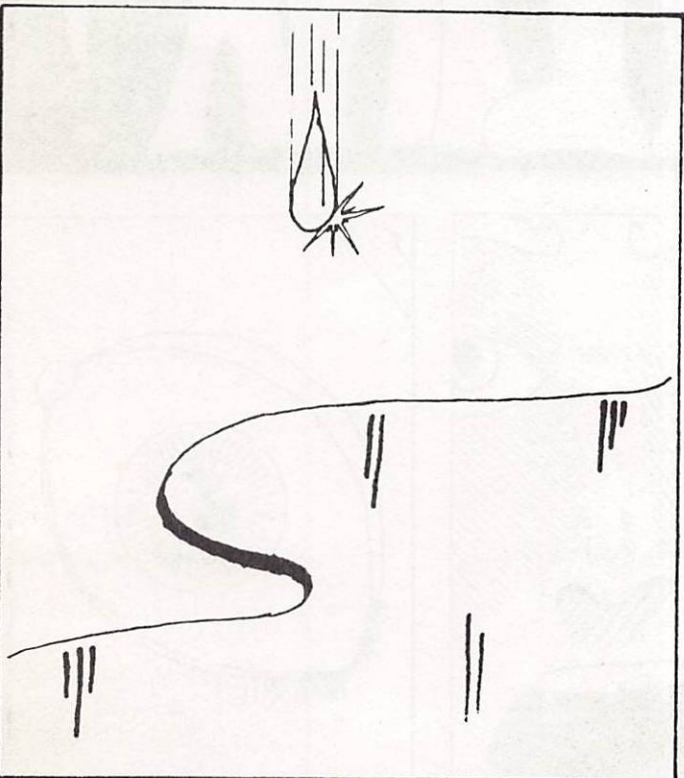
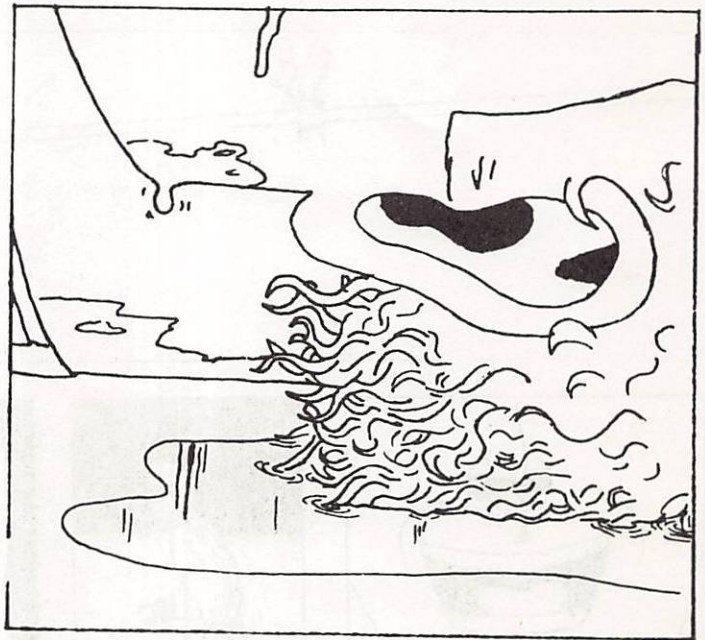
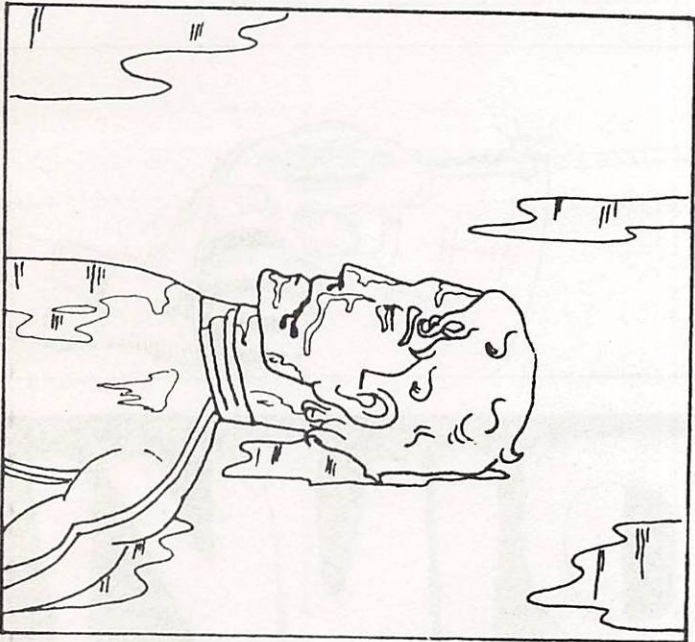
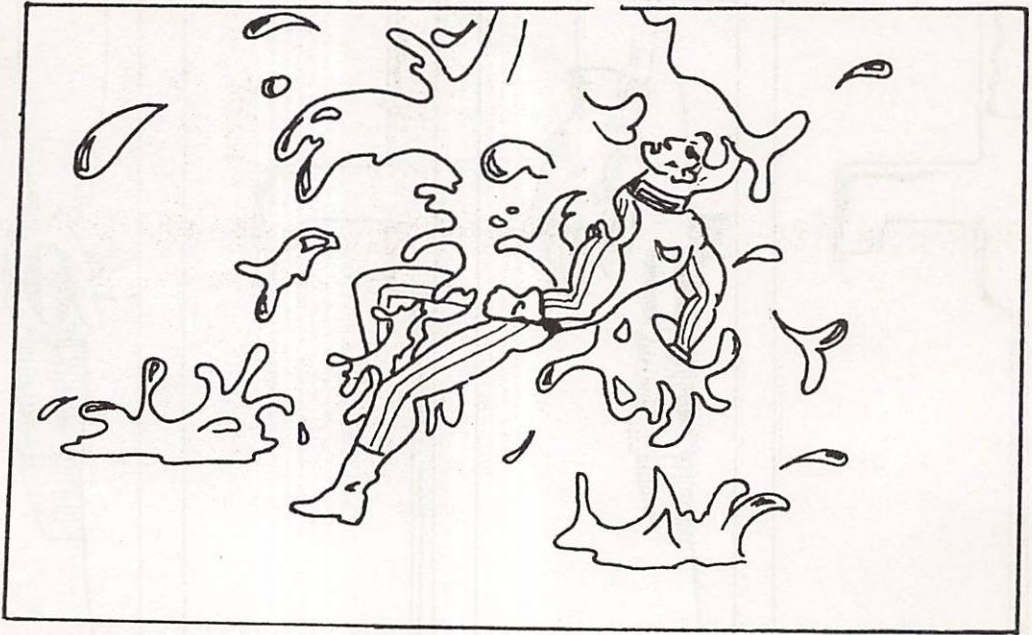
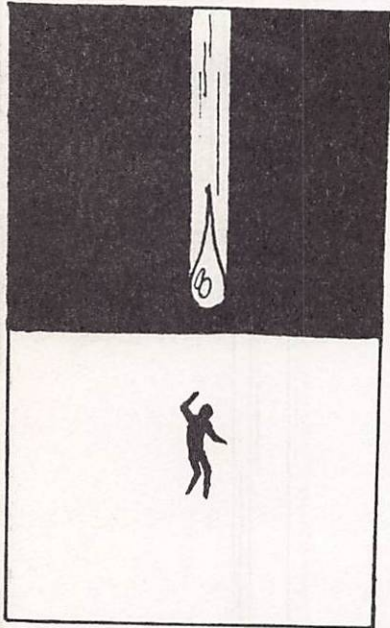
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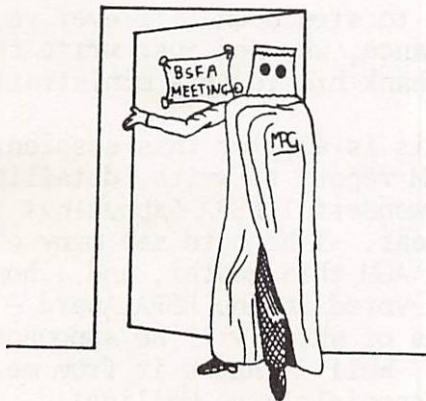
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HACKY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN!

(OR HOW BSFA COMMITTEE HACKS FACE UP TO THE AGM)

--Alan Dorey

Firstly I really must offer my apologies for the non-appearance of my exciting article in the last issue of Matrix. Whilst many of you were probably quite pleased at my absence, my fan in Myth-olmroyd was quite distressed. Entrusting that piece of sheer literary brilliance to the GPO has probably ensured that it ended up in Lerwick and appeared in the February issue of the Orcadian Times. Or the next production run of a certain perforated Andrex Product.



With luck, this mailing should reach you before YORCON II, which means that I can at least announce that the AGM is still going ahead on Friday April 17th at the Ladbroke Dragonara Hotel, Neville Street, LEEDS. If you want to come along and participate, you'll be more than welcome. An agenda has been prepared by the committee, and this is distributed with the current mailing together with a set of accounts for 1980 (these are still subject to audit). As you will see, a number of officers come up for renewal, and as I announced last February, anybody who wishes to put themselves forward can still do so provided Kevin Smith, the Company Secretary receives a Nomination with proposer and seconder by April 17th. I know that time is short on this occasion, but to date, I've only received one, that from Paul Kincaid. Following the resignation of Trevor Briggs from the post of Business Manager (Trev feels that a change of scene will do him good, and besides, somebody new might just be able to prise open the tight fists of advertisers a

little more effectively because they'll be an unknown quantity), Sandy Brown has put himself forward as a candidate for this position. Although Sandy is already a very capable Membership Secretary, perhaps such a combination of roles could prove to be a benefit. Anyway, we shall see on the day. Gosh...it just doesn't seem like two years since I became Chairman, and as you'll see from the enclosed Agenda, I'm up for renewal. Since I've every intention of standing again, I trust I can count on at least some support!

In the next few months, we're mounting another recruiting campaign. This is so that we can increase the inflow of new members and be in a more favourable position to plan for the future. A quarter-page advert has been placed in Starburst (with a circulation of 55,000) which should generate at least 100 new members. In addition, an arrangement was reached with Arrow Books last year for an exchange of adverts. Here, we accepted Arrow Books adverts for focus, whilst we will be having half-page displays in the summer schedule run of Arrow SF paperbacks. This will be of immense use to us, since paperbacks have a reasonable shelf life in book stores, and can get into libraries. At those latter places, the chances are that our ads will be around for some considerable time. We're fully aware that we might experience a temporary influx of new members, but I'm certain that the present committee structure can more than adequately handle it.

The BSFA litho machine, ably minded by John and Eve Harvey, is already proving to be of great use. Not only are we printing our own magazines on it (and any handbills, headed notepaper and stationery we require), but also taking in a considerable amount of outside work. Whilst this means a lot of hard work for John, it does also help to swell the BSFA's coffers. Just recently we've done YORCON 2's progress reports, Geoff Rippington's Arena and

Trevor Briggs and Alan Ferguson's Second Hand Wave. The machine is also showing its worth as far as costs are concerned, since, without it, I'm positive that the membership rate would have increased to £7.50 simply to cover the two recent postal increases – and that's without any additional increment for increased materials cost. Anyway, in the near future, the mighty litho machine will be having a change of location as John and Eve move residence from Morden to Carstraltom. No doubt change of address details will appear real soon now!



Just a final few words on the assistance rendered by various people on behalf of the BSFA over the past year. The AGM will see a few changes and policy decisions, so this issue's short column will be more than made up for next time around, you lucky people. I'm sure you will join with me in thanking the BSFA Council and Committee for their exertion, but once more, especial thanks must go to that able stalwart, Keith Freeman. Without his expert help and guidance (both in his capacity as Master of the Membership Lists and as a long-serving member), I'm sure that all the changes we've seen in the last few months wouldn't have come off so successfully. More importantly,

often at very short notice, he's prepared to give up weekends to organise the infamous BSFA mailing sessions, a value that is difficult to quantify but one that would be sorely missed if ever he decided to step down. If ever you get the chance, why not just write to Keith to thank him for his ministrations?

Anyway, this is all for this session. I've an AGM report to write, detailing all those wonderful BSFA happenings of the last year. I hope to see many of you at the AGM this Easter, and I hope you've all voted in the BSFA Award – the results of which will be announced next time. Well...that's it from me. Enjoy the special large mailing!

CONVENTION LISTINGS (Continued):

BECCON 81: 31 July 2 August 1981 at the Essex Centre Hotel, Basildon. Room rates £12 single, £20 double inc. VAT. GoH: Barrington J. Bayley. Smallish Con – up to 200 members. Supporting, £2.00; Attending, £5.00. Details from: 191 The Heights, Northolt Mdx UB5 4 BU. PR2 now available. Films include DEMON SEED and THE POWER. 116 members to date.

BABEL-CON: 8-9 August 1981 at the Grand Hotel Birmingham. Hitch-Hikers Con. £2.50 for Supporting Membership. Joy Hibbert, Knouchley, West Bank Winster Matlock Derby.

STUCON '81: 14-16 August 1981. Con members will live in Stuttgart (West Germany) and travel by bus to the nearby Kursaal Stuttgart (a palace!). GoH: Marion Zimmer Bradley. Other writers attending include McCaffrey, Lundwall, Campbell (Ramsey!), Wilder. Membership: Attending, DM 20 (about £5.00), going up to DM 30. However, local fan custom allows a Genuine Fan (sic) to bring a non-fan partner free of charge. Cherry Wilder tells me that the definition of a 'Genuine' Fan includes a member of the BSFA – (now you realise what benefits there are in the good 'ole Bosfa) and that 'non-fan partner' includes wife, husband, lover, etc. Details from Denis Scheck, Falkenstr. 25, 7061 Berglen 4, West Germany. (I suggest you enclose an International reply coupon)

BENELUXCON: 28-30 August 1981: Rotterdam, Holland. GoH – the unlikely combination of Jack Vance and Stanislaw Lem. Further details appear elsewhere in this issue. This is a very popular convention, held, alternately between Holland and Belgium. It usually has an international programme, fannish and serious, with items in English and other languages. The committee would very much like to welcome more English fans.

AUCON '81: DeVere Hotel, Coventry: Strictly "STAR-TREK" convention - Attending Membership £12.50 - details from 54 Foxhunter Drive, Oadby, Leicester LE2 5FE.

DENVENTION II: 3-7 September 1981. The World SF Convention at the Denver Hilton, Denver, Colorado, USA. Membership \$35 Attending, \$15 Supporting, up to 31 March when the rates go up. GoH: Clifford D. Simak and C.L. Moore. FGoH: Rusty Hevelin. Info: Box 11545, Denver, CO 80211, USA.

ANGLICON 81: Informal minicon 4-6 September at the University of East Anglia. GoH: Ian Watson and John Sladek. Membership £24.00 including bed and breakfast. Contact: Linda Campbell, 32 Gage Rd, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk.

UNICON 2: 11-14 September 1981 at Keele University. GoH: John Sladek, FGoH: Alan Dorey. Memberships: £5.50 Attending, £3.00 Supporting. Contact Chris Davenport, 'Bridge End' Shawbury Shrewsbury Salop. (A good bunch these Keele people.)

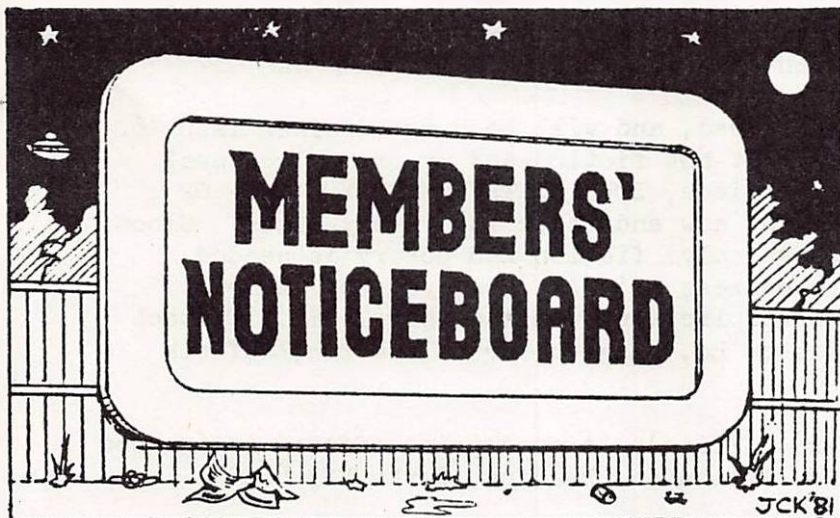
NOVACON 11: 30 Oct-1 Nov, at the Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham. Supporting £2.50, Full £5.50. PRL now available - Room rates pretty good: £10.50 (sharing), £13.50 (single), including VAT and Breaky. The Committee seems to move further and further away from Brum each year. Chairman is recently converted Leeds Fan, Paul Oldroyd; Art Show is being run by ex-hippie film-star, Pete Lyon (also a Leeds Person); and Advertising rests with Joseph Nicholas. Book early to avoid disappointment - 500 limit.

CYMRUCON: 14-15 November 1981. Central Hotel, Cardiff. Organised by Cardiff SF Group: Membership £2.00 Supporting, £5.00 Attending (£7.00 on the door). Usual Recipe con - films, debates, fancy dress, talks, etc; speakers include: Mike Ashley (The Elder), Lionel Fanthorpe, Chris Morgan, Stableford, Watson. Details (s.a.e.) Naveed Khan, Room 16, Traherne Hall, Llwym-y-Grant Rd, Penylan, Cardiff CF3 7UX.

FILMCON 81: 27-29 November 1981 at the Grand Hotel, Brum. Memberships: Supporting £6.00, Full £13.00, at the door £14.00. Organised by the Birmingham Science Fiction Film Society. Room rates are £10 per person (sharing), £12 (single), inc. VAT and Breaky. PRL available. Further details from 49 Humber Tower, Francis Street, Birmingham, West Midlands, B7 4JX.

CHICON IV: 2-6 September 1982 in Chicago. The 1982 Worldcon. GoH: Bertram Chandler and Kelly Freas. FGoH: Lee Hoffman. Memberships: \$15 Supporting, \$30 Attending; the rates go up. Info: Box A3120, Chicago IL 60690, USA.

British Eastercon 1982: No news of any further bids: Channelcon remains the front runner. Proposals are for The Metropole Hotel, Brighton. Pre-supporting membership at £1.00 is available from Pat Charnock, 4 Fletcher Road, Chiswick, London.



WANTED: Name and address of person in Huddersfield area who bought SF collection about 5 years ago. Please write to: Mr. J. Fairley, 45, Damems Rd, Keighley, West Yorks.

ZZ9 PLURAL Z ALPHA, The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy Appreciation Society (s.a.e. for details) to 23 Northbrook Road, Aldershot, Hants, GULL 3HE.

NOT TO BE NAMED, a magazine of fiction and poetry, should be ready by the end of March.

Contains stories and poems by Steve Sneyd, John Haines, Nic Howard, Steve Ince and others. Available for trade, contribution (s.a.e. please), or 50p inc. postage. Nic Howard, 5 Gray's Lane, Downley, High Wycombe, Bucks.

SCIENCE FICTION FOUNDATION: The Science Fiction Foundation, due to a printer's error, has a batch of faulty but legible copies of Issue 19 of FOUNDATION, their critical journal. They tell us that they were sending out these as samples to new BSFA members whose addresses appeared in our Membership List Amendment Sheets. But, with the recent increase in postal rates, and the cutbacks in public expenditure, they cannot continue to do so. So, if any BSFA member would like a sample copy of Foundation 19, send a self-addressed envelope size 10" x 7", with 24 pence-worth of stamps affixed thereto (iniquitous, innit?) (Or Overseas - four I.R.C.S. - no that would be two, I forgot - printed paper) to Joyce Day, Secretary, Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS...Tell 'em the BSFA sent ya.

GET YER LUVVERLY BSFA BADGES HERE: Don't want to run the gauntlet of the enforcers at the door to the Annual General Meeting of the BSFA at Yorcon 2?? Avoid embarrassment. Avoid G.B.H. A BSFA badge affixed to the lapel or the centre of the forehead will ensure safe passage. We still have a few (well - quite a few) BSFA button Badges, 1" diameter, or 25mm if you've been painfully metricated. They are available for the measly sum of 28p (15p for the badge and 13p for post etc.) from Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Lanarkshire G72 9NA, Scotland. Postage stamps of the unused variety are welcomed - don't let the Post Office make you pay through the nose for a postal order. To overseas members, we'll have to make that - available for 2 International Reply Coupons, unless you can get British postal stamps.

I NEED THE SPACE, I NEED THE MONEY and anyway I can't stand it any more. It was a mistake, a terrible mistake...but because of it I have acquired a COMPLETE SET of the world's most hated science fiction magazine: ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCI-FI MAGAZINE. Help me put right the errors of my youth! Buy the bloody thing from me! Here's what you get for your money: WITNESS the shaming sight of Isaac Asimov creeping and grovelling for the Hugo, the Nebula, the Grandmaster (or any) award. DISCOVER how to set out a manuscript. READ the pithiest letter column in the world, where subliterate sycophants write in and congratulate the editors. THRILL to the stories of Barry B. Bongyear, a frequent contributor. HOWL WITH LAUGHTER at hundreds of brand-new puns. SOLVE difficult puzzles. SEND IN limericks and jokes. CHEER as literary values die. This is the world's most successful digest-size sic-fi magazine. FIND OUT WHY! Yours, the complete set (at least 36 issues) ... £20. Buyer collects (or adds £2.00 postage). Seller will deface with blunt crayons, if requested. NO EXTRA CHARGE. Contact: Chris Priest, 1 Ortygia House, 6 Lower Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA2 ODA.

SFEAR is an SF amateur fiction magazine produced by the Norwich Science Fiction Group. Contributions are required in the areas of Artwork and Stories. There is no official word length or subject limitations, within reason. SFEAR 4 is now available: price 50p including postage. Contact: Alan Marshall, 1 Trendall Rd, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk for both contributions and SFEAR 4.

IN DEFIANCE OF MEDICAL OPINION is almost dead, and will be burried after issue 6. But will this prevent me from printing shit-hot fiction and my crummy reviews? NEVER! Rob Jackson, hold on to your hairpiece, DOWN AT THE SURGERY - EVE OF DESTRUCTION EDITION is being planned right now and under their very noses! Gloom, Doom and Destruction (all non-Space Opera only) fiction and poetry is needed. Come on, give it to me! I dare you to depress me! Artists, you too can pull your fingers out and get working. All unsolicited submissions welcome. Contact Chuck Connor, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Rd, Wissett, Nr Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 ONF.

WANTED: CITY by Clifford D. Simak (any edition). A good price offered if in good condition. Michael Bond, 31 Armour Rd, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks RG3 6HA.

AD ASTRA: Wanted - Issue No3: contact Ian Goffin 19 Edgewell Crescent Foxhill, Sheffield S6 1FG



D. HIGGINS 77

This is the second last set of fanzine reviews I'll be doing for Matrix. By the next issue I'll have been doing these reviews for virtually two years, years in which my work and personal commitments have increased a good deal. My wife has given up her career and had a daughter; as well as my own full-time job in psychiatry I am giving lectures to students — social work and nursing as well as medical — in addition to getting involved in research projects and organising professional exams for trainee psychiatrists. These extracurricular activities take up much of my creative energy as well as my spare time nowadays, and together with these fanzine reviews they are the reason I have simply not had time or energy to devote to what I really like about fanzines, which is creating them. That's why there hasn't been an Inca for two years, since the first one. If I give up these fanzine reviews I will be freer to do what I want with my spare time and energy; and you will be that much more likely to receive fanzines from me. You poor things.

Which is not to say that I haven't enjoyed doing these reviews; I have, very much; and one of the things it's made me want to do is some more in-depth fanzine reviewing. (And I won't necessarily be as diplomatic as I sometimes have in this column!) But the compulsion involved in having to do a column every two months does put the pressure on, and even eating caviar does become boring if one is forced to do it too regularly.

So Graham (and I) have been looking for someone to take over; and Simon Ounsley has volunteered. Simon is a much fresher face than mine on the fannish scene, and I'm sure he'll evolve the column in his own way. More details next time, in my final column.

ON THE CARPET

Rob Jackson's penultimate regular look at recent fanzines and other SF-related small press publications. This time zines received during January and February 1981 are covered. For review up till the end of April, send fanzines to Rob at: 8 Lavender Road, West Ewell, Epsom, Surrey KT19 9EB; from the beginning of May, send to: Simon Ounsley, 13A Cardigan Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 3AE. (Obviously, Simon starting as Matrix's fanzine reviewer means a new "Life on Mars" clubs columnist will be found. See next exciting issue!)

Abbreviations by recommended zines mean the following: A*: outstanding art, graphics or visual production. C*: about comic or visual SF. F*: fannish fanzine. Fic*: containing fiction. G*: with general contents. N*: containing news. P*: with personal contents. S*: about written SF or fantasy.

The Usual, page sizes, printing methods: see last issue for details. (Or next issue.)

SMALL PRESS PUBLICATIONS

S/A* Arena SF 11 (Geoff Ripington, 6 Rutland Gdns., Birchington, Kent CT7 9SN; 60p or 3 for £1.80, plus some of the usual, I expect; A5 RL; 48pp.) Supported by the South East Arts Association. Contains Kate Wilhelm's Noreascon GoH speech, an interview with John Brunner, plus his speech at the Polish national SF convention, and an Ian Watson article on "UFO's, Science and the Inexplicable." Plus letters and reviews. Intellectual level similar to Vector, and neatly produced with consistently good artwork (though not much of it is content-related).

N* Locus 239, 240, 241 (ed. Charles N. Brown, PO Box 3938, San Francisco, CA 94119, USA; 12 for £6 sea or £10 air mail, or 24 for £11 sea or £19 air mail: cheques (in sterling) payable to Locus Publications and sent direct; USQ RL; 20,32,24pp.) The magazine of U.S. professional SF news. No. 239 has a full-colour photo of Saturn and a Fantasycon report, no. 240, a double issue, has a lot of reviews, Agent's Corner, con reports and listings, and no. 241 has an article on quantum physics, plus a report that Charles Platt is to spend a fat advance received for a series of 4 historical novels on hiring someone to edit a hard-hitting review magazine. Could be interesting. Also the usual features: book listings, news of people in publishing, and large and small ads.

FANZINES

United Kingdom

N* Ansible 15 (Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave., Reading, Berks. RG2 7PW; 6/£1 (UK), 5/£1 (Europe), 4/£1 (rest of the world); Q RL/D; 4pp.) Subtle change of emphasis this issue, with quite a lot of real live news from the SF world, though still presented with plenty of humorous twists and comments. There's still plenty of fannish news, though, and bits of aldrich information such as the news that the man accused of being the Yorkshire Ripper "gave his godmother a box of nice chocolates for Xmas; when he was arrested she lost her taste for them and gave them away, which is how they came to be

eaten with enormous relish by the famous D. West." Bleagh.

Beyond the White Gates 2 (Mat Coward, 7 Arkwright Rd., London NW3; the usual or 40p; A4 D; 42pp.) Well-written gazette, interested in the real world. Some might say that articles against censorship, reviewing radio programmes, and about John Lennon's death can be read in the Guardian; but I think fans should not avoid writing about things just because they're of interest to other people than SF fans. There are also articles on SF (by Ian Williams), dragons, and locs.

Birmingham SF Group Newsletter 112.113 (ed. Chris Morgan for BSFG, 39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4LX; £3.50 for a year's BSFG membership and 12 issues; A5 RX; 8, 8pp.) Competently put together and informative, with SF news, group news, pen-portraits of Peter Jones and Katherine Kurtz, a quiz, and book reviews.

Drygulch 3 (Bill Carlin, Jimmy Robertson and Sandy Brown, c/o 18 Gordon Tce., Blantyre, Lanarkshire G72 9NA; FC X/D; 12pp.) It's word-eating time for Jackson again. Last issue I said something about left-wing sentiments in this fanzine; apparently I missed the humour, and 2/3 of the editorship felt they had been tarred with the wrong brush. Sorry. This issue has 3 mildly amusing false covers, and a nice silly bit of faanfiction about hoodlums in Paris, featuring Whiteoak and Darroch among others.

Fantasmagoria 3 (Chris Hughes, c/o Dept. of Psychology, University of Keele, Keele, Staffs. ST5 5AE; the usual or £1 for 3; A5 RX; 24pp.) Formerly Rule 42, but Chris was fed up with it being thought of as a HHG fanzine. Little juicy bits about Omni, replies by Space-Ex and Starcast executives to an enquiring letter — Chris has reproduced the replies so people can judge their quality for themselves; also news, and an amusing Novacon report by John Falrey.

Gae Bolga (Ken Mann, 22 Pennethorne Rd., Peckham, London SE15 5TQ; free, the usual or "one LSD tripping elephant"; A4X; 2pp.) Two poems and a short-short by Catherine Mason called "Stairway to Heaven." Best bit is a one-liner: "Every government should carry a health warning." If it's not original, someone tell me.

In Defiance of Medical Opinion 4 1/2 (Chuck Connor, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Rd., Wissett, Nr. Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF; the usual or request, I think; A4 D; 16pp.) Another interim issue, the only fiction being two short poems. There's an article on video copyright problems, a long, quite reasonable fanzine review section, and some letters; plus bits of the BSFA/PFMA feud which has got so involved it makes my head spin.

P* Napalm in the Morning 3 (Joseph Nicholas, Room 9, 94 St. George's Sq., Pimlico, London SW1Y 3QY; the usual; A4 D; 14pp.) After being rude to Joe last column, this fanzine arrived and I was forced to the conclusion that for me there are two sorts of Joe Nicholas articles: the excellently, cogently argued and the appallingly overwritten. The main piece this issue is very good indeed. Called "The End of the Dream", it posits the futility of dreams of spaceflight and ends: "Like all civilisations, ours is now passing to make way for another," and suggests we should get used to that fact. The letter column is also very lively and literate.

New River Blues 4 (Abi Frost, 63 Queen's Drive, London N5, and Roz Kaveney; correspondence to Abi; the usual or 20p; A4 D; 16pp.) Normally a dual personalzine, this time it's a collection of tributes to John Lennon by various fans, put together in the shocked aftermath of his death. Genuine affection comes across.

The Northern Guffblower 8 (Rob Jackson, 8 Lavender Road, West Ewell, Epsom, Surrey KT19 9EB; free for show of interest in GUFF; Q D; 2pp.) Brief newsletter announcing the GUFF results in detail, thanking those who've helped, and appealing for contributions for further trips. I forgot to thank Ian Maule who duplicated this and the previous issue.

The Pristine Anomaly (Nobby Nils (?), 34 Woodham Rd., Bellingham, London SE6 2SD; write and ask; A6 X; 24pp.) Small non-SF poetry publication. Largely in neat handwriting. I'm no expert, so can't say if it's *any* good or not.

Ragnarok 2 (John Shire, "Ponderosa", Church St., Merriott, Somerset; the usual or 20p in stamps; A4 RX; 10pp.) Rambling natter about various things, e.g. Gore Vidal's Kalki, fandom, etc., all crammed into as little space as possible, surrounded by illustrations of mountains and other things. A fair number of letters. I'm sure everyone else will say the sideways page layout is rendered useless by having the left-hand and right-hand pages different ways up, so I won't bother.

Secrets of the Koan 1 (ed. Trevor Mendham for Univ. of Warwick SF & F Soc.; no address given in the zine, but try Univ. of Warwick, Warwick, Warwickshire; 45p; A4 X; 32pp.) Games zine, mainly about D&D with a lot of technical articles, but one poem, one zine review, and some artwork.



Siddhartha 11 (Ian Williams, 6 Greta Tce., Chester Rd., Sunderland SR4 7RD; the usual; A4 D; 14pp.) Self-denigrating, soul-bearing front page about regaining consciousness in front of a typewriter and realising he was Ian Williams. Inside, Ian tries to write a Novacon report as if the con were a high-society party, and in it he writes about himself in the third person; neither really works. The most readable bits are when Ian is writing in a straight style about things he is expert on: recently read SF, and junk sci-fi movies (here, Battle Beyond the Stars).

Sing me a Song that I Know (Pete Presford, "Ty Gwyn", Maxwell Close, Bwcle, Clwyd, North Wales; editorial whim; A4 D; 6pp.) Those of you who remember Pete's fan activity between ten and five years ago will know he's a very nice guy who foams at the mouth in a totally ungrammatical way when in front of a typewriter. Be reassured: he hasn't changed. Here's a quote, strictly sic: "Can some one tell me . . . how many fanzines do we have going in the U.K. ? If I get 10% of zines now out, That means . . . hmmm! Ten ? Tisint that bad surely . . . it is ! ? !" Other than showing his ignorance of current fandom, he writes of playing dominoes over 6 pints down the pub, and being stopped by the police yet not breathalysed.

Too A Pauling (Paul Kincaid, 17 Radner Bridge Rd., Folkestone, Kent CT19 6AS; editorial whim; A4 D; 6pp.) Little snip-pets Paul has come across in his job for a holiday company, e.g. this from America: "Stanford University has issued a guide to plagiarism. The University of Oregon has issued a guide to plagiarism. The University of Oregon has apologised to Stanford University." Quite amusing.

P* Twentythird 3 (Jimmy Robertson, 64 Hamilton Rd., Bellshill, Lanarkshire ML4 1AG, Scotland; the usual; FC D; 6pp.) Interesting, outward-looking personalzine. Subjects include The Clash and other false rock prophets, patronising attitudes from such as Eammon Andrews to real people whenever they get themselves on TV, and John Lennon's death. He consistently attacks pretension. Getting better each issue.

North America and Canada

G/A* The Bimonthly Monthly 14 (The Gang of Four, c/o Robert Runte, 10057-88 Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 0Y9; \$1.00, \$6/year, or the usual (two copies of your zine in trade, please); USQ D; 34pp.) Ian Maule says he's totally bored by this zine and can't understand what I see in it. Sorry Ian, but I still find it entertaining, well-produced and eclectic in content. Book and fanzine reviews, articles like Steve George's "Ye Olde Lust Shoppe" (which if, say, Kev Smith had written and submitted to you for Nabu you'd have published like a shock, plus Dave Vereschagin's brilliantly imaginative graphics.

File 770 23, 24 (Mike Glycer, 14974 Osceola St., Sylmar, CA 91342, USA; 4/US\$2, or \$1 each airmail; USQ D; 12, 16pp.) The basic US fannish newzine. Club, convention, fan fund, spa, change of address, con bid and other news, plus complete Hugo voting details and a review of Warhoon 28 by Taral. Get it if you're a US fannish fan fan.

Holler than Thou 9 (Marty Cantor, c/o The Smokers' Den, 117 W. Wilson Ave., Glendale, CA 91203, USA (for mail over letter size - Riverton Ave. address still valid); the usual or \$1.50; USQ D; 54pp.) Another huge hotch-potch of a compilation. Some good stuff: an amusing Driver's Guide to Orange County Freeways with sarky definitions, by Lon Adkins; a silly, funny non-article by Paul Skelton about the jinx he places on fanzines by contributing to them; and a well-argued piece by Joe Nicholas effectively picking apart Marty's bigotedly narrow definition of SF. Marty gave Joe's piece the title "You're Full of Shit, Marty," which was totally unfair as the article contained not a single swearword that I could find. Mind you, Marty doesn't take disagreement to heart; he later suggests Joe as a possible Hugo nominee for fanwriting.

A* Janus (becoming Aurora) 18 (ed. by a committee for SF3, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701, USA; \$8.00 for 4; USQ RL 36pp.) Feminist, nicely produced fanzine. Since the advent of the committee editorship, the general SF and fannish content has been reduced; the Noreascon report here is mainly concerned with attitudes to gays and women, and with the contents of relevant panel discussions. There were fewer letters of comment than I'd expect, and not many WAHF's listed, either.

F* Pong 4, 5, 8, 9 (Ted White and Dan Steffan, 823 N. Wakefield St., Arlington, VA 22203, USA; editorial whim only; USQ X; 4, 6, 4, 6pp.) Small-circulation fanzine full of fannish natter. Either it's getting to me, or I'm getting into it; the discussions, standing jokes and little traditions of a small frequent fanzine are starting to build up. If you're getting it, you're lucky, but it's not easy for them to produce large quantities of this zine; and anyway you need an extensive knowledge of fandom's history to understand many of the references.

F* Telos 3 (Gary Farber, Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden & Fred Haskell, 4712 Fremont Ave. N., Seattle, WA 98103, USA; the usual, Interesting Rocks, weird Postcards, Old Fanzines, or \$1 per copy; USQ D; 76pp.) This fanzine is a rare gem: a big American genzine, not only strongly fannishly

oriented and well produced but also containing consistently good material. Brilliant Gary Farber editorial on the changes in fandom in the last 15 years, the core of which is: "SF became average."; he concludes that this changes the preferred mode of communication of the average fan away from the written word because today's fans are less likely to be socially inept and maladjusted in person than, say, 50s fans. There are two other good editorials; a new fannish column by Terry Carr; a review of Warhoon 28 which, while complimentary, slightly misunderstands it, seeing it as merely a homage to a dead past when to many people it actually brings it alive again; columns by Dick Bergeron and John D. Berry among others; the letters include ones by Walt Willis, Bob Tucker, Ted White, Terry Carr, and an excellently argued one by Rich Coad defending Joe Nicholas's fanzine reviewing: "If the British school of blitzkrieg attack is perhaps too vicious, it is in response to the overwhelmingly anti-critical (hence anti-intellectual) bias exhibited in the vast majority of American fanzines. The attitude that fanzines are a labor of love, done only to please the editor, reflective only of the editor's personality, and, therefore, above criticism beyond the so-called "constructive" type (pointing out better methods of reproduction, layout, stapling, ad nauseam) has become so firmly entrenched that angry, heartfelt, fanods are perhaps the only counterbalance." Brilliant fanzine; I'm having difficulty deciding whether it or Twll-Ddu 17 should take second place to Warhoon 28 as best single issue of 1980.

Other Countries

Chunder! vol. 4 nos. 1, 2, 4, 5 (John Foyster, 21 Shakespeare Grove, St. Kilda, Vic. 3182, Australia; the usual or 4/Aus\$2 (proceeds to GUFF); A4 D; 24, 20, 14, 34pp.) This used to be a newzine, but sadly it fell behind schedule for various reasons: it started off monthly, but these issues span the whole of 1980. John is now making it more of a genzine and less totally news-oriented. Notable contents include George Turner on Seacon, where he found the process of meeting people who either were posers or disappeared before any real conversation could occur so unnerving that he preferred the FOKT meeting in Glasgow afterwards: "For the first time since Seacon began I felt at home and relaxed, enjoying a beer among real people." Other contents include con reports, book and fanzine reviews, news, and the first instalment of John's GUFF report. Get this if you're interested in Aussie fandom.

Gegenachein 39 (Eric B. Lindsay, c/o 6 Hillcrest Ave., Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia; the usual; Q D; 18pp.) About a proposed con, Medvention, a visit to a home computer show, and letters. Mishmash of fair art, nothing to do with the written content.

The Mentor 28 (Ron Clarke, 6 Bellevue Rd., Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia; the usual or Aus\$1; A4 D; 26pp.) A cosmological cataclysmic story, a piece of nostalgia about "sense of wonder", an A. Bertram Chandler article about researching in Washington, a review, a poem, fanhistory about fifties Aussie fandom, and letters. Overall a very old-fashioned fanzine.

Munich Round Up 151 (Waldemar Kummig, Herzogspitalstr. 5, D-8000 München 2, Germany; the usual, \$1.40, or \$10 for 8; A4 X; 72pp.) German lighthearted sercon fanzine, with 3-page English summary (quite well-written, too). Various articles and reports; these include European con speeches by John Brunner and Joe Haldeman and book and film reviews and letters.

Sikander 3 (Irwin Hirsh, 279 Domain Rd., South Yarra, Vic. 3141, Australia; £1.00 or the usual; Q D; 24pp.) Another fanzine you should get if you're interested in Aussie fandom. Edited with a sure and relaxed touch particularly encouraging in someone as recently arrived on the fannish scene as Irwin, it has articles about numberplates, about misspellings of his name (by Billy Wolfenbarger), plus an article by John Berry, and such rarities as locs from Harry Bell and Pete Presford.

competition

Competition M34: Dave Langford grumbles

Life is very cruel to me these days. The last of my foolish illusions about the cosmos was that BSFA members knew most of SF by heart and owned vast shelves of references containing all the other knowledge in the universe. How, I asked myself, how shall the pitiful contrivance of my last competition deceive such a massed array of talent? Quite easily, it seems. Excluding member Jim England's postcard on the arbitrary and technical grounds that it's another belated entry for M32 (the clerihews), I have precisely one entry for M34. Step forward, Richard Kennaway: "The ten works are all apocryphal. (A pity—I'd like to read the Tentative Restoration of the Lost Books of Elephantis.) Who the apocryphal authors are I have no idea." Richard has indeed solved the tricky part—I'd love to know how he did it without being able to identify any of the titles—and he receives a consolation prize in the shape of a few fanzines. Now you all know the secret, Competition M34 is carried over to the next issue to give you another chance. Here again are the ten titles:—

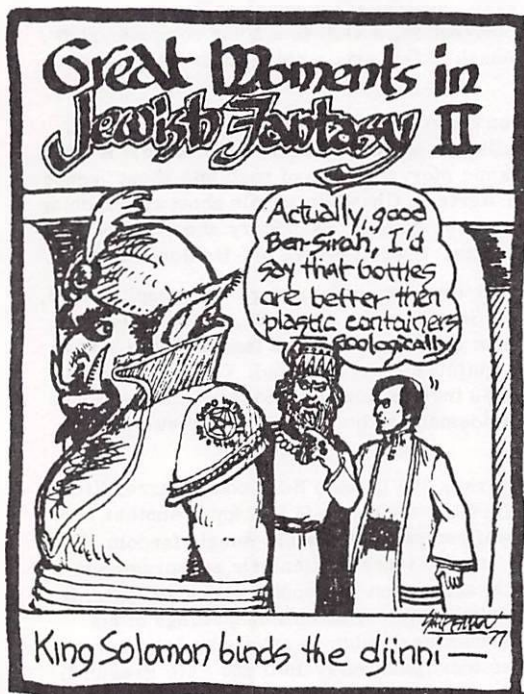
[1] *Blood and Loot*; [2] *Concerning Spring*; [3] *The Higher Common Sense*; [4] *The Holy Metamorphosis*; [5] *The Inexorability of the Specious*; [6] *Negations*; [7] *Problems of Creativeness*; [8] *Profiles in String*; [9] *Tentative Restoration of the Lost Books of Elephantis*; [10] *This Bees Speech*.

These are all titles of 'nonexistent' works referred to in works of SF/fantasy (with one borderline case and one non-SF item to make it harder—as if that were needed!). Personally I thought the last one was a dead giveaway. Again, one point for each correct author/source identification—if I'd set the *Necronomicon* you'd pick up a point for identifying the author as Abdul AlHazard and another for mentioning the works of H.P. Lovecraft as source—OK? Judging from the previous underwhelming response, even a low score might carry off the prize; rush your entries to me now. See below for the deadline.

Competition M35: set by (groan) Dave Langford

This time the theme is vaguely mathematical. Hal, an eccentric printer, has read Clarke's 'The Nine Billion Names of God' and wishes to repeat the experiment on a smaller scale. Devising an arcane sacred alphabet, he begins to print all the different 6-letter Names of God he can construct—nine names to each line of type. A passing lama sadistically observes that without knowing the length of the arcane alphabet, he can nevertheless be sure that the very last line will contain either nine Names or just one. Hal, no mathematician, is still trying to verify this when one by one, without any fuss, the stars begin to go out... BSFA members, of course, will have less difficulty. A sumptuous book token to the niftiest 'proof' of the lama's assertion.

Again the deadline for both competitions is 7 days after the *Matrix* copy date (inside front cover); the address is 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK; the cartoons are a bonus from TAFF winner Stu Shiffman. ☆☆☆☆☆





Letters

Back to the use of a decent typewriter this time - hopefully on a permanent basis - no doubt that will not meet with everyone's approval - hard life innit? The three items which attracted most response from the last issue were, my editorial, Brian Stableford's article, and Joseph's Review of Flash Gordon - a pleasantly mixed bag. The overall response was a magnificent 40 locs - better than any previous issue and, perhaps, fermented by my 'accusations' of triviality; Dorothy Davies' assertions of members' apathy; and the subject matter itself - the merest hint of an idea which has political implications causes people to abandon their Georgette Heyer paperbacks and stomp off to their typewriters to hurl abuse/praise/support at yours truly..... or maybe it was because, other than PAPERBACK INFERNO, MATRIX was the only publication in the last mailing - I suppose you'll all crawl back to your hideaways having given MATRIX the benefit of a few moments of your valuable time - now that is unfair - there are many regular contributors whose assistance I value greatly - but it's letters such as the following that make me wonder whether 'people' actually read the article they are supposed to be commenting on:

WILLIAM BAINS
182 SEDGEMORE ROAD
COVENTRY CV3 4DZ

I bestir myself to Loc MATRIX - I estimate that if every member wrote a Loc for every 2½ Matrices he/she received, as I do, you would have 125pp lettercols - do you really want that much participation? You ask for it though, and I don't only mean your editorial. Personally I preferred the Harvey's

editorial style, but yours is, um, distinctive, and if others believe it has 'improved tremendously' more power to them and you.

Why you trouble to deny your censorship of anything pertaining to Joseph Nicholas, received through you, the BSFA or whatever, I know not. Ho man, de sun he shine and de BSFA editor he chop, dat de life (Damn, mentioned him. Now my letter will never be printed.) He readily admits to carving received letters to fit his preconceptions, which at least is honest. "As I see it"...yes, I can see why you are sympathetic to J.N. But if you really want frank and open discussion of anything we care to mention:

I am a 'genetic engineer' (as of Dec 17th 1980, before then I was a 'genetic engineer, failed') and I grow tired of the influence of SF on my life. Although I read the Bovine eulogies to the Space-God and Ellisonian warnings of doom to come, I do not believe them, not really. If Clarke chooses to say that his Space Elevator will be reality by the end of the next tax year, I would like to know just whose tax year is to pay for the whole unworkable structure before I buy tickets. And if John Brunner believes that nuclear war will Destroy Our Spaceship Earth, while listening politely I will want to see some expert figures before buying 20 tonnes of concrete. It is mean to be SF, after all.

Not all have this attitude. From the pages of pulp SF monsters of unimaginable, and usually unimagined, horror creep, slide or crawl into the mundane world through the minds of the uncritical. There they lurk, hiding behind a 'scientists have proven that'

or under an 'I read just the other day'. And when science, the real stuff and not our pet branch of fantasy, discovers how to alter DNA in a test tube and proudly calls its study 'genetic engineering', the great uncloned public recoil in horror (especially as not all scientists were convinced that it was safe) and demand legislation to stop the mad monster-makers.

I know a technician who spent a week in hospital with burns on his face and hands because of that legislation. He was lucky not to have been flayed with broken glass as well as the government-required safety cabinet exploded in his face. But what do you care for that, you who absorb SF through the gut and not the brain?

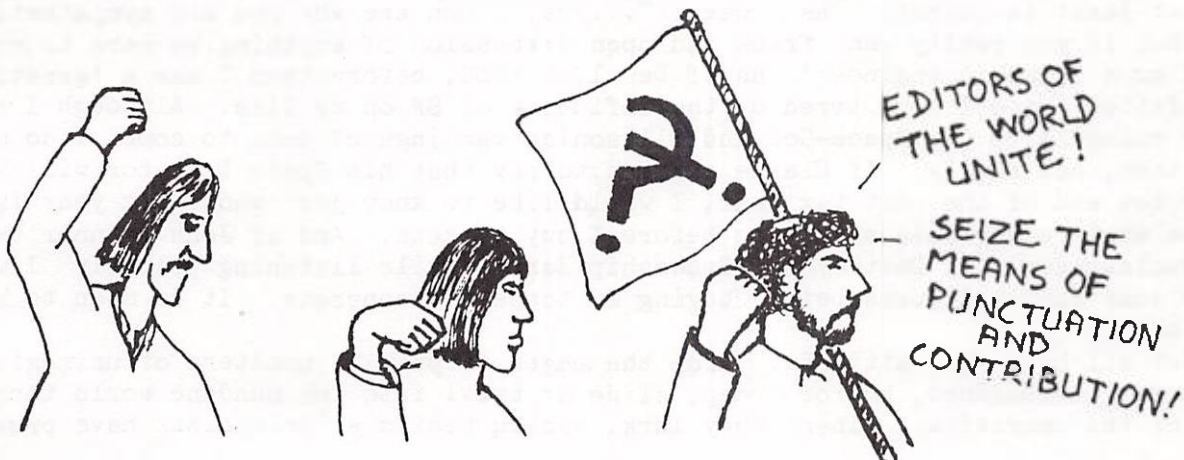
We, the guys on the receiving end, have come up with a defence known as the Civil Service Reply. Now we just say, 'Yes, Sir. No, Sir' until you go away. The more fatuous rules and regulations are fading now as the public forgets what the fuss was about, and becomes satiated with stories about Interferon. Oh, that the nuclear scientists of the mid-50s had had the experience we have had to give them the ability to defend their speciality against SF. For them it showed the opposite face: 'Unlimited, clean, unmeasurably free, it's Nuclear cornflakes for breakfast and tea.' But they were bulldozed by the fictional dreams of their day, just the same. They were not too unwilling - jons for the boys, and maybe some were infected by the contagion themselves. The rest were told that the engineers (a sub-breed below consideration for true scientists) or scientists (a sub-breed below contempt for true engineers) would rectify each other's failings. They have done pretty well: on the day Three Mile Island went AWOL from the power grid 6 miners were trapped a mile underground in a coal mine 100 miles away, with three killed almost at once. But not even nuclear engineers are perfect. ... Neither are genetic engineers. ... And neither are you, peddling your visions of doom or utopia as cast-iron reality. Go bury your head, SF. The world was a safer, saner place without you.

But you do not all believe it. You don't, for one. Your recent investment in the future (congratulations) shows you still have an optimistic outlook. Compare what happened in the early 60s in the Southern USA, when equal rights legislation began to make their lovable racial views illegal as well as antedeluvian. 'Ahm not bringing mah child into no worl run by niggers', and the WASP birthrate fell by about 40%. I kid you not - my source is 'Science'. They lost faith in the future, for a while. No-one, as far as I know, has done the same correlation with SF publishing dates, maybe because most people just do not read the stuff.

...."SF is dead" (Bains)"Bains is dead" (SF) On to Phil Greenaway who is getting slightly more to the point: -

PHIL GREENAWAY
38 9th AVENUE
GALON UCHAF
MERTHYR TYDFIL
MID GLAM SOUTH WALES

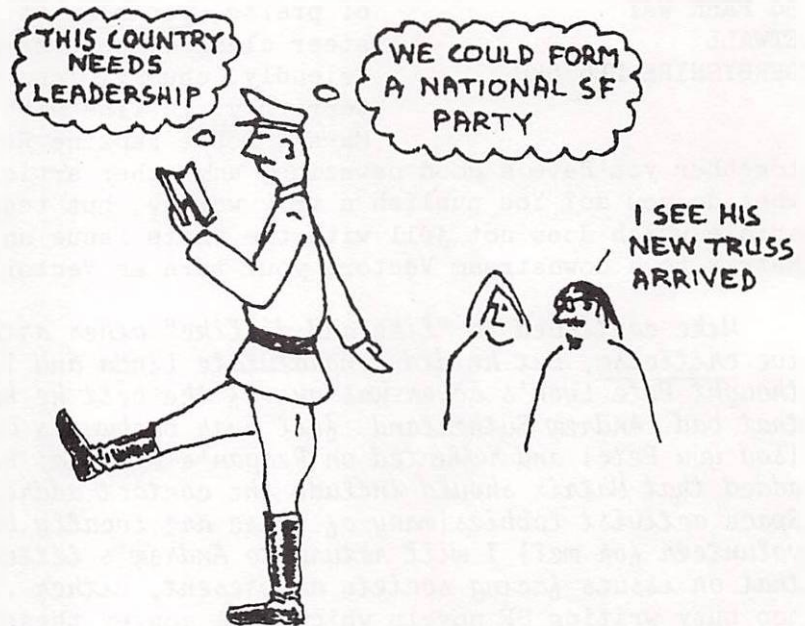
Your desire to use MATRIX as a platform for more varied discussion (relevant to society etc.) is something that I applaud. I've been involved in comix fandom for 5 years, but all the fanzines in this genre deal exclusively with comics, to the exclusion of everything else. I've only been in SF fandom for a year and I'm generally pleased by the SF zines that I've seen (as most don't pidgeon hole themselves into discussing SF only), but even so, they are in danger of becoming tediously repetitive with unenterprising editors constantly describing how they prop up bars and/or fall over in their spare time - ad nauseum. To advocate the need for a more socially aware editorial content in an influential fanzine, like MATRIX, is something that you've got my



admiration for, and probably a resubscription at YORCON as well, because the zine could develop into something really interesting over the next year or so under your editorship, which isn't to denigrate its present quality. There are a few "enlightened" editors in both comix and SF fandom at the moment, and I'm pleased to say that the numbers are growing every day. Raygun and Thatcher have their uses after all!

Since nobody wrote to me saying that they were cancelling their subscription to the BSFA, I feel that, in view of Phil's statement, I should ask the Committee if they would employ me on a commission basis..... James Parker takes hold of the main point of my editorial and you'll be forgiven if you think that his name is a pseudonym for Joseph Nicholas: -

JAMES PARKER
18 KING WILLIAM ST
OLD TOWN
SWINDON
WILTS SN1 3LB



The two most thought-provoking items in MATRIX 34 were your editorial and Brian Stableford's 'What Use Is SF?' I was very pleased to see that you, too, have come to the conclusion that SF must address itself to the vital political issues of the day. For far too long, the wholly escapist tradition within the genre has held sway. The idea of a cosmos subservient to a reactionary Biblical morality reinterpreted through the seedy fantasies of American hacks (don't give me that 'Golden Age' dung) is a lie that has gone on for too long. May it perish, quickly. The vast potential of SF has been betrayed by a grubby Capitalistic infiltration. The literature subverted into a bland melange of wet liberalism, gimmicky technology and brainless heroics. Yes, that most sinister of late Twentieth Century socio-cultural manifestations is now the dominant voice in most contemporary SF novels and films: American soft-option Fascism. A silly thing to say? Alarmist? Examine the philosophy and assumptions extant beneath the pretty techno-violence that is 'Star Wars' etc. The moral implications of this massively successful movie stink to high heaven. And the people take their kids to see it ... And a whole new generation of SF addicts are sucked into the same old routines of non-thinking heroes, lotsa spectacular violence, and, most disturbing of all, hopelessly simplistic moral judgments. In this new synthetic SF now on the ascent with the full acquiescence of the media and the advertising industry there is no value put on the complexity of human motivation, on the sexual instinct, on the political and social and cultural ramifications of any hypothetical place or time. The main thrust of modern SF is, in the final analysis, dependent upon the harnessing of the worst aspects of human nature: Nostalgia for a mythical past/future, an obsessive need to moralise, and a blind love of organised/ritualised violence.

In a world where the dream of space exploration is extinct (and always was if you really think about it), where millions starve, and where, simultaneously, endless reserves of finance and energy are poured into creating weapons of almost Apocalyptic destructive power, the last thing we can possibly need is a literature that perpetuates all the old lies and deceits - especially when it's done in the sacred name of 'entertainment'.

Sorry, unlike many so it seems, I do not worship, or care to invoke, that darkest of pantheons bearing the triple godhead of Heinlein, Lucas, and Reagan. No, I subscribe to a still embryonic literature that is not only at ease with the imagery and patterns of the late 20th Century but is still concerned with people, politics, sex, Art, and the power of language itself. Ultimately, a literature that can undermine the all-pervasive cynicism of our sad age and replace it with something less corrosive of the spirit; something that is truly Socialist, progressive, and optimistic...

Paul Smith didn't seem to share the view that the contents of MATRIX should be open-ended, he said that "MATRIX was not the place to discuss world problems; SF books were and that most SF fans read SF to strengthen their opinions on current affairs." A dubious contention, but maybe if I re-read Heinlein it may give me a view of current America; he added that MATRIX should continue as it was - "back-stabbing and all as practiced by some of the greats, Brutus, Stalin, Thatcher." Paul also wrote with a complaint about the ORBITER service, but I would prefer to let Anna Prince reply to this before commenting further. Michael Bond and Nick Lloyd both wrote in favour of widening the subject matter of MATRIX as did Iain Byers, whose letter I include later. Mike Hamilton tells me that

MIKE MAHILTON
38 PARK WAY
ETWALL
DERBYSHIRE DE6 6HU

Frankly Graham, even though there is a lot in M34 worthy of praise, you blew it. In my experience MATRIX has tended to steer clear of pure sercon and has projected the image of the friendly, chummy, fannish society side; well clear of VECTOR's territory. In line with this is Simon's excellent 'Life on Mars', Rob's Fanzine Reviews, the info, con-reps, etc - all together you have a good newszine, any other article would be the icing on the cake. So what do you do? You publish a very worthy, but tedious, very boringzzzz Stableford article which does not jell with the whole issue and deflects(sic) it from the fannish Matrix to a downstream Vector; your turn as Vector editor might yet come.

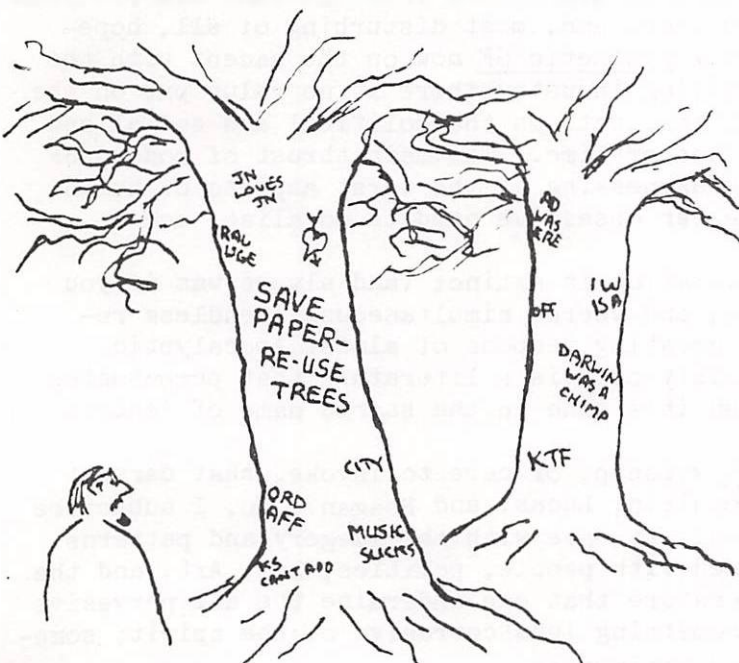
Mike continued to "like and dislike" other articles, without really mounting effective criticism, but he did congratulate Linda and I on the birth of our daughter and he thought Pete Lyon's cover was one of the best he had seen on Matrix, so he can't be all that bad. Andrew Sutherland fell over backwards with praise on M34, especially the cover (sod you Pete) and reflected on Reagan's America; he also supported the line I took and added that Matrix should include the contact addresses of groups such as CND, FOE and the Space activist lobbies (many of these are locally based groups - but maybe someone would volunteer for me?) I will return to Andrew's letter later. Nik Nicholson-Morton thought that on issues facing society at present, either ... "Folk are too shy to take a stand, too busy writing SF novels which will convey these important messages, or possibly it has all been said before and is a bit boring..."....Boring???

JACQUELINE Y COMBEN
27a HERGA ROAD
WEALDSTONE
HARROW MIDDX HA3 5AX

The current state of the world is unfortunately not one which leads to pleasant predictions and if young people were motivated into rocketry by stories which suggested that success awarded them, predictions of a dismal future may actually discourage young people from trying to improve matters, since the stories they read suggest that nothing can be done!

The world is divided into rich and poor and science is the preserve of the rich. Biologists may not like the destruction of vast areas of tropical rain forest and the accompanying extinction of species of animal and plant as yet unknown, but money talks and down come the trees. We do not know what effect that will have upon the carbon dioxide balance, but it is unlikely to be good. The green revolution produced plants which need too much fertiliser to be of value to any but rich countries

If we want to write stories which will encourage young people to enter some field in which they sense that success is possible, perhaps we should not base SF upon current fact, but instead ignore the present, hope for the best, and unite about the future we would like rather than the one we think is likely.



And now to link Brian Stableford's piece

ANDY SAWYER
59 MALLORY ROAD
BIRKENHEAD
MERSEYSIDE L42 6QR

I find myself agreeing constantly with Brian Stableford, but bearing in mind that what he claims is not, of course, the whole truth. I think any competent literary critic uses more than "the tools that are traditionally used by literary critics" - Brian implies, but doesn't really state what these 'tools' are, but I'll accept his implication for the moment.

What he says of SF being worth study as a social phenomenon is true, of course, of many other artistic expressions - punk rock, hardcore porn, Elizabethan pastoral poetry, etc. But we're talking about SF, so I'll leave the others alone.

However, I have to make a few points about Brian's statement that of his five 'apologies' for science fiction, "The first four lines of argument cannot be applied to forms of literature other than science fiction," True: but they do depend largely on that old SF-definer's trick of claiming as science fiction everything which you can put up a half-way decent argument for.

I am not sure what "an alternative resource to other kinds of fiction" is: if one defines SF as fiction dealing with science and technology, which the rest of the paragraph from which that quotation comes seems to do, then by definition you cannot have another kind of fiction as alternative to it. Some of the explanations of what SF does can also relate quite easily to other modes of fiction: i.e., the didactic. Think of that strand of fiction which deals with social/political questions - the novels of Charles Dickens, D.H. Lawrence (in part), or (again, in part) H.G. Wells; leading to, say, Orwell, Huxley and LeGuin: novels which might well inspire readers to take an interest in these questions. Think about John Brunner?

The "cushion against future shock" - Brian dismisses this: a pity because I'd like to think it was a useful function of SF. But the argument proposed is pretty damning. Still, there's always John Brunner.

"Thought experiment" - not quite the same as "prediction". Again, we have a long literary tradition of the literary artist acting as a kind of moral censor for the culture, which, in our society which is increasingly future/technologically oriented, is going to mean looking at alternative futures. As Blake said: "Every honest man is a Prophet A prophet is a Seer, not an Arbitrary Dictator." SF is our culture's 'prophecies'. Why hello, here's John Brunner again!

"A new way of seeing the world": the aim of the surrealists to name but one group

Or, in other words, what is claimed for SF is what has been claimed for other literary modes in the past. The literary vocabulary changes with the pattern of society's changes, and so for investigation into a popular literary form you need to take a broadly sociological perspective. Which is where I'm back agreeing with Brian

I think it was a good article to place in MATRIX. And a good editorial, and I hope someone can do a good job in relating the two. I've written too much already. I wish SF would look to the future: I once, years ago, raised the question in VECTOR about how many SF fans read magazines like UNDERCURRENTS "no answer" was the stern reply. Equally, when I edited MATRIX, I received some stick for insisting on talking about political matters in the lettercol I would argue this, simply: if SF is specifically about the future, its readers ought to be keenly interested about the way this future is going to take shape and what it will look like; if it is a 'symbolic representation' of the present, its readers ought to be doing their best to make sure the present doesn't deliver what it seems to be promising; if it is a farrago of escapist nonsense designed to do anything but inspire people to think - what does that say about you, the reader?

Simon Bostock also wrote, in detail, on the Stableford article and eventually concluded that "SF is just goddamn entertainment". David Brown also entered the fray, inspired as he said by Dorothy Davies' letter, although he was ultra-defensive about being a 'neo-fan' - however, he was one of the few to correctly attribute the D West cartoon on page 33 to Oscar Wilde. I'll conclude the subject with John Bark's observations

JOHN BARK
5 BYERLEY CLOSE
WESTBOURNE EMSWORTH
HANTS PO10 8TS

In his article 'What use is SF?' in M34 Brian Stableford states that four of his functions of SF are not shared by other forms of fiction. Surely this is going too far. Taking the functions in turn:

(1) 'SF is a didactic medium.' SF is obviously not the only didactic form of fiction (if it is didactic at all). The content alone is different, because it refers to scientific matters.

(2) 'SF acts as a cushion against Future Shock.' Science Fiction did not invent change. To take a random selection from my tiny library of main-

stream novels, Conrad's Nostramo is entirely about political revolution. Change, growth and decay are inherent features of great literature, and SF creates no greater (possibly less) cushion against the real future than any form of fiction.

(3) 'SF is a medium of thought experiment.' All literature functions as thought experiment. Authors set up initial conditions - society, characters, social relationships and so on - then follow through the consequences: the plot! Again it is purely the content of SF which sets it apart from other forms of fiction, not the function.

(4) 'SF is an aid to a new way of seeing the world.' Uncle Tom's Cabin helped to end the Slave Trade by giving people a new perspective on the Negro Slave. How many SF novels can lay so strong a claim to changing widespread attitudes?

All Brian's analysis seems to say then is that SF is different from other types of fiction because it is about science - a characteristic it shares with any physics textbook. This does not appear to me as an adequate ground for the study of SF as a special social phenomenon. We might as well lump it with popular science writing and treat both as one.

An alternative approach, which seems to yield a much stronger tool for examining the SF phenomenon is to look at SF, not as unique, but as part of fantastic or mythopoeic literature in general, 'feeding some kind of innate need for mystery' (Brian's function 5). If this is the principal function of SF we have an explanation for the quasi-religious fervour of fans, the sects and schisms of fandom, the acceptance of Tolkien by many SF readers, the continual usage of immortality and superheroes as themes in SF, and all the other aspects of SF as religion.

So when we have explained the psychological functions of fantastic literature, and how its style and content have changed historically, the only important judgments left to be made on SF will be literary.

Further change of subject - Joseph's review of Flash Gordon

CHUCK CONNOR
c/o SILDAN HOUSE
CHEDISTON RD WISSETT
Nr HALESWORTH SUFFOLK

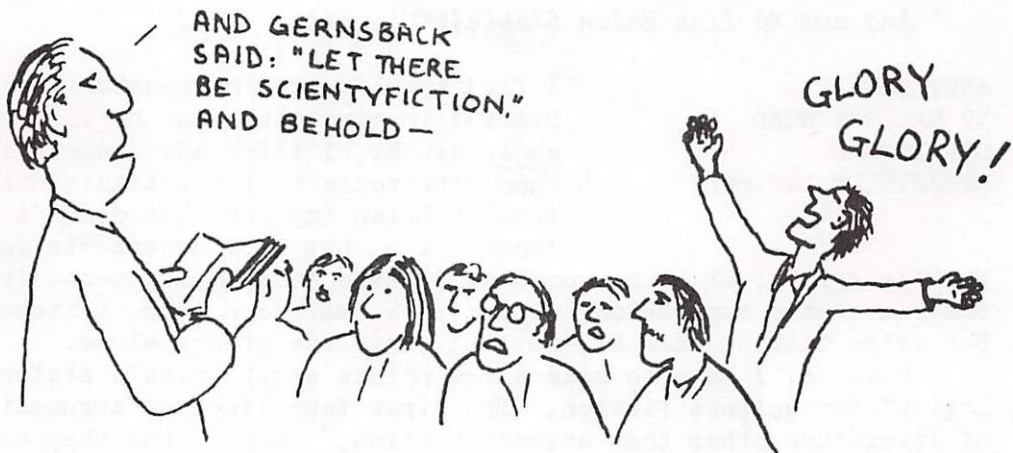
I'm sorry but Bollocks, that FLASH GORDON review (????!) was the biggest load of crap in the whole of MATRIX. Let's face it, Joe just doesn't understand Pantomime even when it hits him in the face. First it was STAR WARS and the "Omi-gods every SF film will be a carbon copy of this and it's going to be really dreadful, Dah-ling." Of course, these

predictions were proven correct with the advent of CE3K and SUPERMAN and ALIEN - all notable SW rip-offs, as they all deal with SF.

Christmas time is Panto time - no matter what the story is based on, be it Fairy Tale or SF/F - and is designed as entertainment without the need to study every single word of the dialogue for any secretly hidden sociological reference or meaning. Have you no sense of humour? Is SF (the stuff that is so dire at the moment that you slag off nearly every SF/F book written these days) so dear to your heart that you can't even take a joke about it?

MARTYN TAYLOR
5 KIMPTON ROAD
CAMBERWELL
LONDON SE5 7EA

Why does everyone so dislike this Joseph Nicholas, I wondered. Then I read his review of FLASH GORDON. Everything he wrote was true, and those were the reasons the kids around me stopped swearing and throwing things. Some



of them almost smiled. I'll swear I even saw one laughing. So it was an 'Over the Top Productions Inc.' film, and the acting was strictly bacon butty (a lot of ham and old corn) but there were not pretensions and I haven't laughed so much since I saw Apocalypse Now. It must be awfully dull and serious inside your head, Joseph N. I'll bet you not only know what 'semiotic' means, you also employ it. I'd watch out, if I were you. One of these days you may wake up and find you've turned into a dung beetle.

I liked the cover. I haven't seen a photograph of the West Riding since I left Leeds seven years ago, and I was glad to see that nothing much has changed. The landlord looks the same, only more so, even if the clientele are better looking.

What do you mean, it wasn't a photograph?

SIMON BOSTOCK
18 GALLOWES INN CLOSE
ILKESTON
DERBYSHIRE DE7 4 BW

Concerning the Joseph Nicholas FLASH GORDON review. I recently went to see it at the local cinema and found it to be a fun film. Sure, some of the effects left a lot to be desired but then we don't judge a film by how much is spent on it and how good and realistic the effects are, do we? I don't anyway. One of the biggest laughs for me was the scene

where Zarkov's spaceship was setting off -- on a miniscule rocket jet! Anyway, I would suspect many parents won't let their kids go to see it ... it has swearing, y'know! And in an 'A' film, too! And what's wrong with BARBARELLA, anyhow?? Damn good entertainment. Another memorable moment was at the end when the rocketship flew past the wedding with the flag trailing behind. The first says "Citizens will make merry". Then a next comes by, saying "At the penalty of death". Great stuff. Is Ming dead??? Wonder if sales will warrant a sequel. I know the local cinema was packed solid, on its second week of showing. And that's unusual for any film at the Scala. Only GREASE managed it.

I agree partly with what Phil Greenaway said in the lettercol. Fans shouldn't attack others because of their preferences. So, I think Asimov isn't that crap an author, do I have to be condemned because of it? I know, I haven't, but I can guarantee that if I had a letter published in MATRIX a few issues ago there'd be letter of protest and attack. He's no better and no worse than the majority of SF authors. But, because he has a huge unwarranted following, people pick on his stories and laugh at his so-called disciples. Anyway, I agree with him there, but constructive criticism and praise should be given to all authors and they should not be ignored. The purpose of review copies is to offer this, and not synopsis the plot and make no attempt to offer advice to the SF reader.

Before offering another view on Phil's letter, I shall slot in a brief comment from ANDREW SUTHERLAND on Simon's last point: "Comparing PAPERBACK INFERNO with publishers' catalogues, it is obvious that many new SF novels and anthologies are not reviewed by Joseph Nicholas and his team - a recent example being the Gregory Benford/William Rotsler collaboration, SHIVA DESCENDING. Surely a greater number of shorter reviews would be more palatable."

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I think Phil Greenaway exaggerates a little in his comments about insularity of taste in fandom... "My favourite author walks on water and yours is a talentless hack"... is a game we all enjoy, and which nobody takes too seriously.

Outside the arena of written SF though, the knives come out to a far greater extent. There seems to be a prevailing opinion that anyone with an interest in Media SF, for instance, is automatically a cretin. As a film buff who is also an SF fan, I find it a little irritating when people assume all I want to do is rave about STAR WARS, or about how butch Paul Darrow is.

If that's what you want to talk about, fine; buy me a drink and I'll listen for hours. (Or as long as the beer holds out.) But be prepared for an earful of STALKER, or THE MALTESE FALCON, or Ray Bradbury, or rock music, or astronautics, or whatever, in return.

After a year spent nurturing a fledgling local SF group, it seems to me that the wider the range of opinions and interests you can attract, the more fun it is for everyone. Total conformity is not only boring, but self-defeating; diversity and disagreement broaden everybody's outlook.

Just a final comment on Joseph before advice on childrearing from Helen McNabb.

HELEN MCNABB
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LLANTWIT MAJOR
S. GLAM

I do love Joseph Nicholas. The more you read him the funnier he gets, he can't really be as obnoxious as he makes out. But there are quite a few thoughts of God in SF - A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ, A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, and LORD OF LIGHT came immediately to mind, but there are undoubtedly many others. The absence of a belief in God does not necessitate the capacity for enquiring thought any more than the

reverse. As written, the letter has an air of complacent arrogance which brings Ian Paisley unpleasantly to mind.

Congratulations also on your daughter. I do agree that children make you think about the future. There have been times in the last 19 months since my daughter was born when I wonder whether we did the right thing in bringing a child into the world as it is now, although at the same time I wouldn't be without her. My perceptions have altered and I have a more fundamental worry about the possibility of civil unrest/war/final holocaust or whatever. At the same time, watching her batter hell out of a friend's son with a brick causes reflection on man's innate aggression.

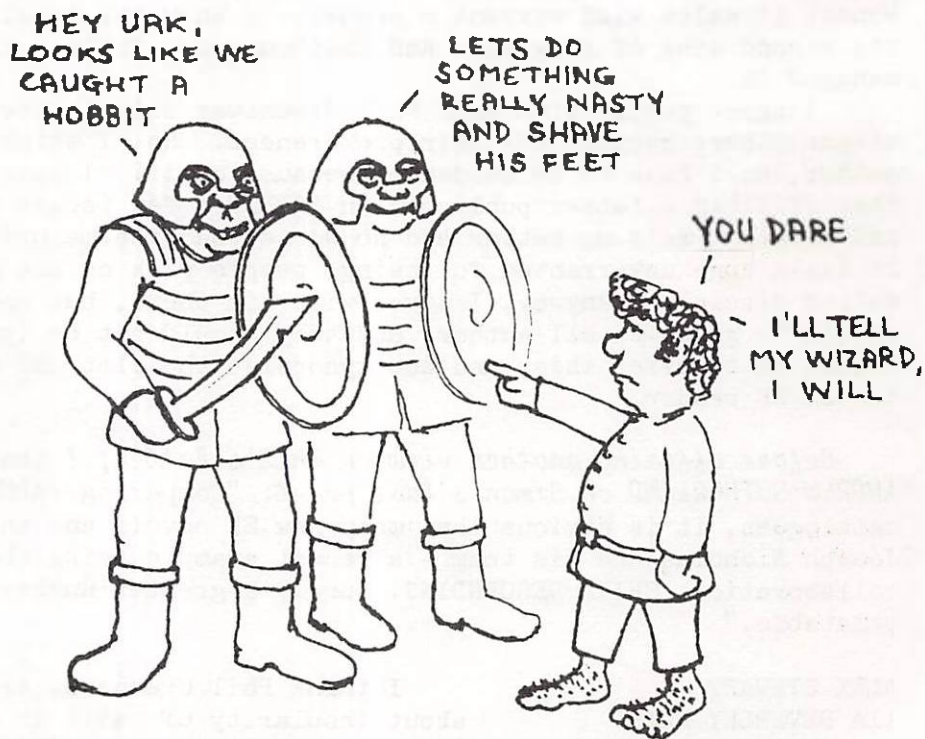
Thankfully she will grow up to be a woman, rather than a man! Also, it is important for parents (and non-parents) to take care about focusing on innate aggression, since we can also see innate love demonstrated. (Linda) Some further thoughts left over from the last issue on artwork in BSFA publications: -

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As editor of MATRIX it is up to you to edit, to decide how the zine will look, and of course you are perfectly entitled to do so, even expected to. All editors wish to impress something of themselves on their magazine and by far the easiest way to do this is by influencing the visual appearance. I, however, find your attitude to artwork disturbing, and I find the endorsement of this view by others more disturbing still. Yes, we all get tired of seeing the same old Foss-imitation spaceships, but to proscribe virtually any such illustration is totally unacceptable. Art-

work should be judged on its merits, on the quality of execution, and not simply content alone. After all, the alternatives to hardware illos are pneumatic, Playboy women, toting phallic symbols, dressed in fetishistic fashion, and looking mean enough to bite off a person's vital organs, or, worse still, supposedly funny illos, or hobgoblin, Tolkien-inspired elves and gnomes, or perhaps worst of all, OMNI-like Surrealism. All of these are stereotyped images of science fiction, they are categorisations, and all art can be categorised. And not just art. But just because they are categories it does not mean that they cannot be fine examples of draughtmanship or originality or creativity. They can all provide excellent visual stimulation. The criteria must be quality, beauty if you like, but if you think I can provide a measure of beauty then you will be disappointed. The final judgment can only rest with you, or any editor, and everyone has their own opinions about what is good and what is not.

Why is it we do not see any abstract art? Perhaps it reflects something about SF fans as a group, or perhaps it is nothing more than the fact that abstract art does not lend itself to black and white or reproduction. Maybe we just do not want to see abstracts. Whatever the answer to that question may be, we should always count quality



above all else. The illos should reflect a variable content. Only that way can you be sure of satisfying all of the people some of the time. After all, I doubt very much if you refrain from buying a book simply because it displays a cover you do not like. Anyone who did so would find their choice of reading matter seriously diminished.

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As an 'Artist' I felt I should make some comment on the question of artwork. You have said that you tend to feel more obliged to publish artwork than written work. However I do not feel that bad artwork has any more right to be published than badly written articles, and I include my own work in that statement. However, the way I see it, there are two forms of artwork used, and different criteria can be said to apply. First, there is the cartoon, and although there should be no excuse for bad art, the humour of the subject should be judged over the artistic quality. Some professional cartoonists I have seen published in magazines over the years have apparently lacked artistic ability while producing good humour, and often such cartoonists will make their own artwork the butt of the joke. In my work published so far I hope that the lack of artistic flair was made up for in part by the humour. The second form of art is obviously the serious illustration, and here the artistic ability is paramount, and in a fanzine like MATRIX the only real excuse for bad work can be lack of participation by budding artists in the BSFA.

As I have said before, MATRIX is the members' magazine, and therefore all members should at least have some opportunity to contribute, whether it be prose or artwork; naturally I have to use my judgment in editing to select what I consider material of sufficient quality to adorn the pages of MATRIX. As Michael Gould says, the only real excuse for bad artwork can be lack of participation by members - in that sense it's up to you. Whilst I don't wish to denigrate anybody in particular (although there are certain exceptions) there is much material that doesn't get published in MATRIX. I don't think I've rejected anything on the grounds of prejudice, but, as I said before, if people are going to send me artwork then please make it something other than phallic spaceships and barbarians. Now for a little bloodletting

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Seem to have irritated the Langford over something. I don't really see any reason for mediafans to make his acquaintance. To quote a friend, J. Nicholas to be exact: "You have to work to be accepted in fandom." The fact that you can't hold to your own rules is a little surprising. I suppose you could start looking round the One Tun next month

He also seems somewhat het up by the PFMA and poetry/fiction magazines. This couldn't have anything to do with ANSIBLE being slated rather heavily in a couple of non-SF magazines, could it, Dave?

Finally, Dave seems to be accusing me of something which I never said (an old trick which goes as far back as Cicero). Of course, MATRIX discusses - I use the word loosely - films; Comics - very rarely; Media def. television, films, i.e., non-written SF. However, I was complaining about the BSFA's derogatory attitude to mediafans (e.g., Star Trek, Dr Who, etc), not about coverage. For instance, see Simon Ounsley 'Life on Mars' in M33. There are many more examples. Don't the BSFA realise that this continuing snobbish attitude is losing them an additional source of revenue?

Having alienated Asimov and Heinlein fans, I suppose it was a natural progression to be scathing about something else to break the monotony.

And now the moment you've all been waiting for, after months of delicate negotiations between the respective legal departments of the BSFA and the PFMA, the following settlement has been worked out by Ken Mann with agreement by your editor: -

(1) The note in MATRIX 32 regarding poetry/fiction magazines and which also mentioned the PFMA was not intended as a slight or an attack on the association, its members or those involved in running the association. In fact, you agree with (at least) one of the objectives of the association, that is, poetry and fiction magazines should be sustained and promoted.

(2) The subsequent issues of MATRIX contained remarks from both sides of the 'argument' which were inflammatory and provocative and thus exacerbated the situation. Thus, neither side is free from blame and must bear a part of the responsibility for perpetuating hostility.

(3) Both the BSFA and the PFMA will take all reasonable steps to ensure that such a situation shall not arise again.

(4) As noted in a letter to me, while you remain MATRIX editor, you intend to give fiction/poetry magazines more prominence than in the past.

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Although Simon Bostock may be correct in claiming that BATTLESTAR: GALACTICA was a fast-buck rip-off of STAR WARS, I think he's missed the wider implications of the recent court case and the decision that Larson and Universal TV did not infringe Lucas's copyright. When I first heard about the case from Brian Aldiss, who'd been hired by one

of the companies involved as an expert witness, I had grave fears that Lucas would win out in the end. If he had done so, the whole of SF - TV, films and books - could have been very seriously damaged. A genre that is at its most basic a vehicle for ideas would have found those very ideas locked solid in legalese and copyright restrictions.

SF depends upon freedom of concept; the moment you start crediting individuals with the creation of the building blocks of the genre and forcing other writers to pay for the privilege of using those ideas, the field will begin to die. Larson and his contemporaries may well steal left, right and centre from films and magazines (Harlan Ellison tells an amusing anecdote about one producer who waved his hand at a pile of pulps and told Harlan to pick a story he liked and "adapt" it for the guy's studio, leaving out nicities like royalties or credit, of course - needles to say, Harlan refused point blank), but unless they come up with a complete xerox (the first draft for BATTLESTAR read like one) the studios should be rewarded with contempt not law suits. Claiming that BATTLESTAR broke the STAR WARS copyright because they both use John Dykstra's spacecraft is as ludicrous as claiming that GUNSMOKE stole from HIGH NOON because they both feature horses.

The ultimate irony of the case is that it was brought by the makers of one of the most derivative films in years; no doubt the creators of the FTL drive, METROPOLIS's robot and bionics would have benefited from STAR WARS' amazing profits if the verdict had been different. Fortunately, it wasn't.

Most of the other letters received have, at least, been referred to above (if not quoted); but We Also Heard From ALAN FERGUSSON (who provided an analysis of Pete Lyon's cover, vis a vis the 'original MELANCHOLIA); TREVOR MENDHAM, JOHN KERR, ROELOF GOUDRIAAN, DOROTHY DAVIES, GRAHAM ENGLAND, IAN GOFFIN (twice), JACQUELINE COMBEN (again), A.W.A. WATKINS (who added further comments on D's cover "It was a piss-take of 1950's SF/Horror film and literature"), PHIL ROBERT, NICK LLOYD. ARTWORK RECEIVED from: PHIL ROBERTS, NIK NICHOLSON-MORTON, DAVE BROWN, PETER WALKER, SIMON BOSTOCK and MICHAEL GOULD.

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