

SPICY RAT TAILS

#4



What you are reading, if anything at all, is the fourth issue of a very serious and constructive fanzine dedicated to promoting the Republican view of life called Spicy Rat Tails, in case you missed the cover. If you don't know why you're getting this then chances are you didn't, and if there is a mark _____ just there then you probably won't be unless you do something quickly. The colophon is produced by Rich Coad, now of 1735 47th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94122. The gorgeous cover is by Bruce Townley as are all interior illoes except one that is by someone else named David Miller. Don't worry, you'll recognize the difference in style.

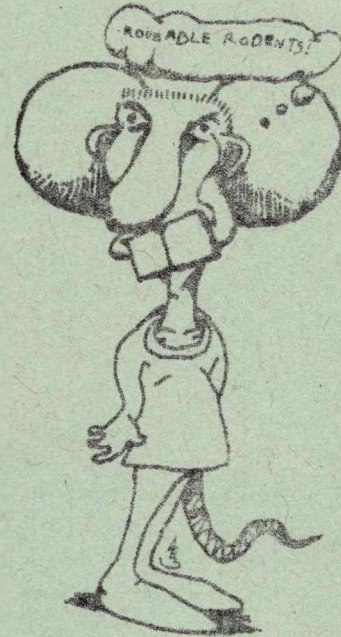
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THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FEAR

As wasn't noted above (I forgot) this is the special regeneration and paranoia issue. Ho, ho, did I hear you say? C'mon now, 'fess up, you can't deny it, that snide, derisive chuckle left your lips, didn't it? Ho ho, you said, here's that little fool Coad again thinking he can get us to write long letters of comment and send our zines to him in trade for his sad attempts at humor. Bloody well right, I answer.

Paranoids may come, and paranoids may go, but never change their point of view.

Yes, that's true. Consistency is one of our greatest attributes. Like, for example, my publishing schedule. Obviously, since it has been a year since the first issue, and this is the fourth issue, it's simply a matter of long division fingers and a calender to realize that SRT is a quarterly fanzine. Obvious, one would think, but nevertheless wrong. The general idea is to publish as frequently as enough things happen to fill a dozen or so stencils, on the principle that quantity can indeed make up for quality and in the interests of quick response. However, it being nearly three months since the last ish you can, if you wish, consider this issue a quarterly. The delay (for such it was) was caused, naturally enough, by a hellish conspiracy between my roommate and the Westercon committee. This odious pair plotted, very successfully, to wreak havoc with my finances by staging first a scientifiction convention then a move. As a result fanac was curtailed while the sack of strange fluids, tar-stained lungs and frayed nerves that calls itself Rich Coad scraped together enough cash to move across the bay, thirty miles from work, into a house shared with Owen & Hilda Hannifan. Actually, I've always wanted to move to the city, especially to the area I'm in, two blocks from the grand Pacific and six from Golden Gate Park. So events, forced on me though they were, turned out to be not so bad, after all.



Even paranoids have real enemies.

Indeed we do. And one of mine, apparently, is the United States Postal Service which has stolen from me issues of Don-O-Saur and K. At least the fannish benefit-of-the-doubt rule leads me to believe it's the Post Office's fault, not the worthy fans. One fanzine disappearing into the PO's bowels I can understand; two is an obvious conspiracy.

I must have the luck of the paranoids.

A brief history of the back cover seems in order here. It was on June 14 that I ventured into downtown Oakland to meet a friend and travel over to see Paul McCartney. Whilst I was waiting I was approached by your typical-looking young transient. "Excuse me," he said producing two drawings, "I'm just in town, between jobs and blah, blah, blah. I'm trying to get enough money for a cup of coffee so if you'll give me 26¢ you can have your choice of my drawings." It was such a departure from the usual scam I would have given him the money anyway but I couldn't pass up the opportunity. So what is on the back cover is paid for, thus making this a semi-pro zine. Since I'm on the subject of art I may as well mention lay out. Previous issues have had none which is the reason for the conservative, to say the least, format this time. I approve of learning the basics before experimenting; I'm no Bill Bowers. I would, though, appreciate it if you'd note whether you found things competent or horrendously incompetent. Nor have I ever used electro-stencils. I'm relying on Bill Breiding to teach me but I'll do the work. So, if the artwork resembles a black hole or creased shirt or something blame me, not Bill or Bruce or David. Ta.

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HOT FLASHES

BNF libeler SIMON AGREE has bought a new bottle of Southern Comfort and is working drunkenly on ABBA ZABA 8... BILL BREIDING'S plans for two September issues of STARFIRE have collapsed. Number 8 should, however, be out soon... LYNN KUEHL & CHERYL CLINE are to be married (to each other, dolt) sometime soon. SPICY RAT TAILS regards marriage as a risky business at best but nevertheless wishes them well. Lynn and Cheryl are also to be thanked for providing David Miller's illo. Well known CENSORED man, ah fan JERRY JACKS is planning a fanzine titled, tentatively, DECADE SF. HE will deny everything if this rumor is published... On a slightly more realistic level Jerry is bidding for San Francisco for both the 1979 Westercon and 1984 Worldcon... At the kick-off party for the '79 bid Jerry was heard to say "My God, what have I done?" before falling over... Really huge name fan PETER ROBERTS is standing for TAFF. Mr. Roberts is a vegetarian, a failed (twice) MA and general good egg. SPICY RAT TAILS goes along with all right-thinking people in supporting this modern-day miracle of cardboard and licorice in his candidacy. See you in Miami Beach Peter... BRITAIN IN 79 yes indeedy... JOHN HALL has once again not produced a masterful fanzine



RAT ROOTS

It was Alan Bostick who started the clamor, and enough others seem to be interested in a Ratfan history to warrant this article. Actually, this is very presumptuous of me. It was immediately after Torcon that I left for London; soon after I had fallen in with a circle of fans known collectively as Ratfandom. In May of 1974 I returned to Oakland. Ten months as a Ratfan hanger-on hardly qualifies me as an historian. But (and you knew that was coming, didn't you?) since no-one else seems likely to undertake the task, and since I, at least, identify myself as a Ratfan (oh, Greg since I now pub my ish am I closer to being an expatriate Master than an expatriate Buddy?) I'll do it. Sort of a fannish public service message.

Peter Roberts must take a share of the responsibility, or credit, for it was none other than he, who, back in the heady days of the late sixties and early seventies, began Silly Animal Fandom. So far-reaching was Peter's interest in God's little jokes that he even titled his fanzine for a Welsh translation of a Silly Animal. As I said, these were heady days, and even Peter Roberts was a little neo in Bristol once. But I digress. While Peter was pubbing ishes of Mor-Farch and preparing for eventual TAFF candidacy, while Peter Weston's Speculation was garnering Hugo nominations, while Graham Charnock was discovering booze and masturbation, two unknowns were planning the conquest of first British fandom, then the world. Picture a young man in National Health glasses clutching tightly a scarf of dubious origins muttering, in his Pembrokeshire Welsh (which is to say English), "Nookie, nookie, nookie" and occasionally "I'll show those cretins". This, indisputably, was Greg Pickersgill. Meanwhile, some miles to the Northeast, in Coventry, was yet another young fan in N.H. glasses. He dreamed of failing his exams and making three thousand pounds a year after taxes as a bank clerk and embezzler. Occasionally, in conversation, his face would light up and a devastating quip would spew forth. This, unquestionably, was Leroy Kettle. It was this dynamic duo of lethargy, angst and neuroses that produced a fanzine that has somewhat changed British fandom; changed it, in fact, from a mere pallid reflection of Yankee fandom into what Jerry Kaufman has called an alien entity. Fouler was the zines name (a zine, incidentally, I was promised a complete run of when I left England. I have yet to see it.) and it was damn good. For me, the single most memorable attribute of

Fouler was The Blinding Pillar of Incandescence, a section of the letter column which reproduced the most cretinous loc relieved. Also noteworthy were the always artistically innovative covers, Greg's fanzine reviews, and the early Kettle writings which, while usually good, are not quite up to the standard of fandoms best writer. Greg and Roy startled fandom with their willingness to forsake bland tact, ignoring the bad and stupid, for a sometimes scathing frankness. Needless to say this caused some ill-feeling but it also brought in a fair response and loyal readership. Fouler did, in fact, become something of a focal point. As



he had been in on the start of Silly Animal Fandom (at Arcie Mercer's house) Greg decided an appellation was needed for those fans associated with Fouler, preferably an animal that was neither cute nor cuddly. Thankfully, Greg's own contribution of Axolotl was soon discarded in favor of Roy's Rat. So Ratfandom was begun.

Rob Holdstock, the famed vivisectionist and budding young science-fiction writer, was recruited and became the third Rat. And in 1970 they were joined by Australian fan John Brosnan, who had just come from Perth to Heidelberg by bus (a trip made possible only because it was undertaken by scientificion fans who have Certain Knowledge Unknown To The Outside World - like how to get a bus from Sydney to Singapore). Thus the original Hard Core Four were complete. Fouler lasted six issues then died for the usual reasons but Ratfandom continued growing, like the cancer in Brosnan's nose, ever larger.

Which brings me to 1974 and a fanzine called Ritblat/Grim News, one of Greg's all- too infrequent dives into pubbing. It lasted a mere two issues (perhaps the result of Greg trying to overdo it and pub on a monthly schedule) but one contained a sort of State of the Union address by Greg. What happened in the intervening couple of years is lost in the alcoholic haze Ratfan's call memory. Here, though, is Greg Pickersgill telling Where It's At In '74.

WHO DO THESE PEOPLE THINK THEY ARE ANYWAY?

Well, that seemed a lot easier a question just after the Bristol con, in those pretty good days of '73, when I wrote this;

THE LADS

Someone at the con asked me just who it was composed Ratfandom, and I didn't answer. Dumbfounded, I suppose. Later the same day someone asked Christine Edwards if she was part of Ratfandom, and after a bit of casting about she said she was, not without a certain sense of pride, I thought. And yes, for one reason or another, she surely is. But why? Is Ratfandom composed of people who just hang around together habitually, or by general geographic location, or by a likemindedness of some especial sort, or what? Like, it might be easy to say OK, Ratfandom is a London outfit, with Hall, Kettle, Brosnan, Holdstock, Edwards, and a few female hangers-on. But what about Ratfan Buddies, like Piggott or Peter Roberts? Maybe they wouldn't want to be called Ratfandom outright but surely they're the kind of people it would be good to include. Also there're several of Gannetfandom (for the moment leaving the unsettling notion that Ratfandom is rapidly taking on the aspect of Gannetfandom's Southern Office) and several others from "uncommitted" parts of Britain who are all good friends and associates and seem to have some mental communion. So what do ya do?

Most commentators define Ratfandom as a London thing, a local phenomenon, which isn't exactly the deal, as I'd like to see it anyway. After all, the name was originally adopted as a group banner not as a local tag as was the Gannet label. To me Ratfandom is more a religion than a nationality, unconfined by geographical consideration. As far as I see Ratfandom comprises people from all over, almost irrespective of other groups they tend toward. It's a state of mind, basically. More or less, these are those I think are with it:

John Brosnan; Roy Kettle; John Hall; Rob & Shiela Holdstock; Peter Roberts; Bryn Fortey; Ian Maule; Malcolm & Christine Edwards; Thom Penman; Jack Marsh; Graham & Pat Charnock; John Piggott; Bob Rickard; and, of course, Greg Pickersgill.

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Well, for post-con elation that seemed reasonable enough at the time but, looking back, around and ahead these days seem a lot different, and maybe those days weren't like that either. So what now?

The Gannet squad have increased their intensity so much any serious suggestion that any one of them would rather sit down next to Ratfandom has become rather silly. In fact, for one reason or another general Ratfandom contact with the Gannets is sparse and poor, though that's not at all to be taken as indication of Gannet lack of inclination or whatever. However, generally with all their super-success in cons and fanzines they're as remote from Ratfandom as Ken Cheslin is in the opposite direction.

Bryn Fortey, con hardman and old-time buddy, seemed to fade away into a horrific series of trials in the South of Wales and seems to have little inclination towards fanning of any kind.

Piggott seems to have totally vanished in favour of wargaming, something of a tragedy as he was the best new fanwriter of recent years as well as a Good Fellow to meet with. He's currently down as definitely appearing at Tynecon, but he hasn't shown at anything like a Globe for long months.

John Hall became the subject of some controversy and to all intents and purposes estranged himself from the group as a whole.

The Edwards', Charnox, Marsh and Rickard were all pretty peripheral people at the best of times, and whilst they haven't by any means made any renouncing gestures they've never been anything like pillars of the community. No slurs or anything, they've got their own things and problems, and in one or two cases are too far removed geographically (even though they all, with the exception of Rickard - who might be appalled to find his name in this company - live in the London area) to have much involvement. Actually, whilst speaking of married people and women generally, it would appear that most of the women tend to lose whatever interest in fandom they acquire. Indeed, most of them tend to denounce Globe-going and other fannish events as second only to menstruation in their calender of monthly irritants. This more or less confirms my belief that fanning is nothing to do with women anyway, but there's a different story altogether.

Which, to all intents and purposes, leaves the supposed 'hard core' Ratfans: myself, Brosnan, Kettle and Holdstock. Along with, I suppose, Ric Coad and Peter Roberts - both by accident more than any conscious design. As described elsewhere herein there's a lot lacking in current Ratfan activities; Roberts being seen so little as to make his continued presence in the city a matter for some conjecture. There's a lot lacking in the fabled mental communion bit too, as I hope to make clear in these pages.

Holdstock has his problems, academic and literary as well as being actually married. He tries to keep up his fan-contacts with more success than the rest of us, mainly because of his fascination for

the prospect of becoming a professional writer. He's less than somewhat involved in the Ratfandom concept except as a vehicle for having lots of laffs. He seems to see the whole thing as something of a harmless hobby for taking your mind off the vital things in life. Like being married and selling to ANALOG. This seems a nasty dig at him, which it isn't really, as he is more the only thing that holds us together socially than not and truthfully, for all the ways he irritates me in his attitudes to fanning and our group he's a great man.

Kettle, though more inclined to view the group as a potentially good and viable thing, goes his own way. He's very seldom seen these days, even by Rich Coad, who lives in the same house. Kettle's problem is very much close to my heart, it being the classic one of fafia by female. There's nothing like women for screwing your fanning. I know, I was in the same situation for as long as a year, and I'm only just out of it now. Shit, that kind of thing is OK as long as you don't get obsessive about it. Still, he's very much a fan on the underside and it's only a matter of time.

Brosnan, of course, is virtually Ratfan sans parcell, with SCAB and excellent fanzine appearances (often with Tails of Ratfandom) all over. He's also most group oriented, inclined to join in on any social event, but entirely against any notion that Ratfandom might be anything more than a group of idiots hanging around together. And that of course is the point to which I've been leading up.

Lunatic as it might seem to you, I'd like to see whatever it is that passes for Ratfandom exceed the strictures of its corporate neuroses, inadequacies, and stupidities to make something greater than the sum of any of the parts. OK, I know that this has echoes of the great commune myth of the sixties (though I must admit I've never quite thrown off the attractions of that idea) but there must be some way in which we can accomplish something more than sitting around yelling at each other about the fact that we don't do anything better than nothing. And not necessarily purely in a fannish environment either, for all the fact that that's a vital part of my life.

Maybe what's required is for people to think of the group first, to ally themselves more with one another, to be less selfish and devote a little more of their consciousness towards a general improvement of our mutual way of life. Not to deny their own veins of achievement at all, merely to ensure that for every pace they might make away from the group-consciousness, they should extend themselves backward one pace, tunnel in two directions at once.

It's better, at first, to confine this 'thinking' to a purely fannish aspect, but even there nothing functions. Probably I'll unqualifiedly stand by Roy Kettle's assertion that as a group (and 'group' meaning the four people composing hardcore Ratfandom) we can easily match or overrun any comparable group in Britain. Certainly our ideas are always viable, revolutionary, and far-seeing. The fact that they're often put into practice by other people long after we proposed them seems to confirm that. Naturally enough for all the sitting around and talking we do not a damn thing gets done, and after a while it just becomes something that was talked about once sometime, can't remember when, and lost. I find it hard to see why we can't do it. But it's probably not hard really, it's just that everything else gets in the way and there's no space for

any trivia like a fanning project which is by 'realistic' peoples' definitions a trivial hobby project then how can you get anything that has a more general bearing on the whole life of the people involved even discussed properly? It's nothing more than a general unwillingness to function as a group. It's okay to talk about it, okay to pretend for a while that it's going to be done, but God forbid that anything will be done. That might compromise everyone into ways of thought they'd quite obviously prefer not to explore.

Alright. Leave that for the meantime. Back to the point, What's Ratfandom. A simple enough question, as most people can see.

Ratfandom is a group of people, varying in size, that appears almost spontaneously at certain social functions. At cons this group is at its largest, swelled by a lot of people who derive the most enjoyment from a con when they're with friends who lounge around disreputably fooling around, getting drunk and generally having fun. At Globes there's another Ratfandom, even though it's mostly the same people. But this time they stand around together talking to each other about virtually everything. Ratfandom is entirely a public, social institution, something that doesn't carry over into 'normal' life, just goes more or less dormant until the next time you need a group of B*U*D*D*I*E*S to have fun with. Lotsa laffs. Big deal.

But fuckit anyway. Whoever they are they're the best people, whether they recognize themselves or not. They're the ones who find many fans silly people, with trivial sense of humour, lacking in anything approaching genuine friendship as opposed to jolly camaraderie, overconcerned with the more irrelevant aspects of everything. The ones who see most fans as prudish, flauntingly inadequate and overconcerned to be good fellows. The ones who see most fans as too much the same despite their superficial and deliberate attempts to set themselves apart from the 'mundanes'. Ratfns are the best ones, more or less, even though they're a bunch of no-good irresponsible, uncooperative, neurotic, selfish, ignorant, uncommunicative, alienated, estranged and useless bunch of bastards.

Great people.

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Thank you Greg. That about sums up what a Ratfan is, though I am disinclined toward Greg's vaguely Deglerish goals for the group. I tend more toward Julia Stone's view that Ratfandom is the Bloomsbury set of fandom. Certainly they are the most talented group in fandom today, embracing the best zine, writer and reviewer as they do. At any rate, things have changed a bit since Greg wrote that. The Charnox have gained fame with Wrinkled Shrew, which had my vote for the Hugo but failed to make the ballot, Grah has also brought out the best personalzine since Waste Paper with Vibrator. Greg put on a razzle-dazzle display of fanac with three superb issues of Stop Breaking Down. It may have folded already, in which case it is fandom's loss. Brosnan continues to produce Scabby Tales, though he won't send it to me. Rob Holdstock, to no-one's surprise has now sold a couple of novels, probably to Malcolm Edwards who, besides zine reviews for Maya buys books for Gollancz. Roy Kettle has shocked everyone by writing a startling number of articles as well as True Rat, which is now becoming a faanish fanzine (#8 is reviewed elsewhere this ish if I have room). Me? I work for the phone co.

AND YOUR BIRD CAN SING

Bloody hell. I wasn't exactly overburdened by scintillating locs this ish. Christ, people, merely because I write nothing perspicacious is no reason for you lot to follow suit. After all, you're supposed to be witty and super-intelligent scientfiction fans. So get with it! However, there were a few good grovellers like the following maniac:

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Thanks a lot for SPICY. (Is the name a cunning diminutive of SPICY RAT TAILS, or has the name been changed? Unless you keep Full & Frank records, the fan history of the 70's may have holes in embarrassing places.) (That last line's too good to touch.) Thing is, I'm wary of US fanzines: from time to time, you see, we get imported American talent in UK zines. Looking at the amazing quality of such expatriate prose, one (posh for "me") is led to think that, if this is the super high-quality stuff produced just for export in order to impress the Brits, then the ordinary boring stuff that gets chucked around at home must be pretty fearsome... (By the way, my sentences are shorter than that as a rule: there's something about typing after midnight while suffering from a cold that turns on my garrulity valve: just as well, since Hazel got this bloody great air letter that is going to take me hours to fill unless I write lots of long boring sentences like - look! I've done it again.) Moreover, there has to be a dire significance in the way that Greg and Leroy and the Mob have almost entirely English circulation. (Apart from a tube in Greg's left thigh that's made from real Texan plastic.) In short, I've been led into a deep distrust of American fanwriting. But then (the picture brightens, the music skips an octave into a paean of joy) I discovered SPICY! God, it's good. Just like the ratzines I get over here. Well, not quite the same: similar style but that transatlantic viewpoint which makes us poor-relation Brits look like the stunted barbarians that we are... Now I'm overdoing it. Loathesome sycophancy drips from my every pore, like revolting ichors from Yog-Sothoth or Ian Maule's hotel bed after the con.

((Great groveller, this kid. Should go far. Aside from the debatable point that Texas is part of the US, how do you get such knowledge of Greg's thighs Dave?))

Mike Glicksohn
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Canada

In answr to your question on the worth of the lowest of creatures, the correct answer is obviously (d) and (e). In the previous issue of XENIUM I wrote a comparison of a cat with a bottle of whisky and the cat was a very poor second. In the issue just out Leroy trie to make a rebuttal but while his writing is a pleasure to read, t. defense of the cat and attack on whisky and dogs is so rife with logical inconsistencies that it's pathetic.

((Mr. Glicksohn has just turned thirty. It would seem quite obvious that the inevitable brain rot often associated with this, oh extremely old, age has already become pretty advanced in his case. On the next page he continues with the All New, All Thrilling, Feud Section!))

You really ought not to print such libelous remarks as Agree's comment that drink and faanishness have rendered me impotent. Larry Propp will be contacting you soon. But what can we expect from a well-known retarded transvestite and pederast like Simon? (Actually, I suffer from terminal crudzine and tertiary fuggheadedness.)

Simon Agree ((yes, really))
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I must protest in the strongest possible terms against M. Glicksohn's allegation that I am a pederast and a transvestite. After

all, if I were a pederast, I would surely be much fonder of Mike than I am. As for the other, well, many of my friends are BNF libelers and only a few of them are transvestites. I ask you, can anyone who doesn't wear underwear possibly be a transvestite? Really! I don't need to refute the charge of brain damage, my zine speaks for me.

Mike Glicksohn again

Having viewed the remarks of Simple Simon I'm reminded of the saying my

dear old Mother used to whisper in my ear. Namely, "A smart pederast may boy up your spirits but a dumb pederast is a bummer." Somebody should introduce Mr. Agree to a dictionary...if they can find a dictionary with a long enough attention span to stay awake during the introduction. I must also pass along the reaction of my chesterfield which wrote "Dear Sir: I must strongly protest the intimations of the last loc. Many of my best friends are unimaginative but only a few of them crib from Monty Python" just before getting stuffed. My refusal to make the obvious connection is a significant departure from the Rileyesque tone of the rest of this paragraph. (Any of your readers who understand that are probably not worth saving anyway.)

((Who am I to argue? Anyone that does understand that allusion had best hold still if they want to go on recieving SRT.))

Graham Charnock
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No news of London fandom for you I'm afraid since I've been away for three weeks of nude sunbathing with Malcolm Edwards on a remote Greek Island. How about a few anecdotes about Greek food

and music instead, since Spicy Tales 3 seems preoccupied with these topics. Ethnic Greek food (i.e. as served to tourists) is invariably lukewarm and swimming in olive oil. The choice is great, as long as you want stuffed peppers. It is the custom in Greek restaurants for you to go into the kitchen and inspect the food in preparation and make your selection. One suspects this is a custom for tourists only. Your regular Greek peasant must know it's always stuffed peppers. To be fair I did once try squid and chips which was okay since the tentacles fry up nice and crisp while the body remains plump and fleshy and tastes not unlike scampi. During our stay we got regular gifts of food from the family who rented us their villa. The macaroni pie was great, the plateful of dripping honeycomb palatable but excessive, and the jar of octopus tentacles pickled in ouzo simply out of this world.

As for Greek music. Well, when you've heard one bouzoki record you've heard them all. But I suppose the Greeks might say the same about C&W or punk rock.

Oh yeah, the Greek for I fart is *Kakia*.

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Both Brian Parker and Mauler have threatened to write and complain about my letter in Spicy 3, so I reluctantly sit down to put the record straight, just in case either of them pull their fingers out long enough to turn their threats into reality. Okay, okay, I admit it; the Oriental provender commissariat I mentioned didn't sell pickled dogfish fins, but pickled shark fins. I am assured there is a significant difference. And Mauler does not eat Vesta instant curries - well, not often anyway. His favourite food is actually Findus Frozen Pizza, and if you think that sounds revolting you're dead right. Recently, too, he has consumed much Yeamon Instant Potato, which he mixes with hot water from the tap and a raw egg or two in a one pint beer mug. Other comestible news is that Peter Roberts is seriously worried about the drought we're having at the moment, as it threatens to put the price of potatoes and cabbage up to previously undreamed-of levels. My correspondents from the One Tun report that he is pouncing on unwitting souls there in an effort to persuade them to exchange two bushels of cauliflowers for a lifetime subscription to Egg. So far only Greg Pickersgill has taken up the offer, and the cauliflowers he supplied turned out on inspection to be Jerusalem artichokes - the root of all evil, in my opinion.

Thanks for the puff about my earldom, though I'm afraid you got my title wrong. I am, of course, Lord Oklahoma, Such is the prestige concomitant upon my elevation that I was offered a half-price associate membership of the Austral League! - a signal honour which I doubtless would have accepted with due grace had not the organizers forgotten all about it the following morning. Perhaps I shall attend Novacon disguised as the Tentacled Horror from Alheana IV to spread peace and understanding; I imagine aliens are permitted free membership.

That fellow Glicksohn is talking more and more about drinking; I am afraid this has sinister implications. American beer you can keep, as long as I can obtain true beer hand-pumped from the wood, brewed by those modern day saints Young's of Wandsworth. Their delectable beverages are delivered each day, by horse-drawn dray, to my local; I often wonder how I ever managed without my daily transfusion of a couple of pints. It's a great pity real beer doesn't travel; a couple of barrels shipped to Suncon would be an incalculable advantage in persuading people to vote for Britain in '79.

((Just keep up the advertising, John, and everyone will want to visit England just for these wondrous brews. And cheap draft Guinness! Britain in '79!))

Jim Meadows III
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Hordes of ~~XXXXX~~ ~~XXXX~~ young teen agers swarming to conventions won't be fatal to fandom, Rich, honest. I mean, a lot of our most illustrious fans were teen age trufan. once. Of course, I haven't been to any conventions, so I don't know the particular horror you envision of teen age fans (sounds like a great idea for an old Roger Corman horror movie: "From across the nation they came, swarming to hotels to congregate in groups, their minds filled with the rejected ideas of disillusioned hack writers... why this strange compulsion, this obsession"; you could call it "Slanshacks to Hell" or something, with Peter Fonda as a youthful Bob Tucker, and Vincent Price as Richard Shaver...).

Olfo Svoboda
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Terminological difficulty for me in Bruce Townley's little letter, or what appeared as Bruce Townleys little letter although in another situation it probably would have been something else. Maybe "British da" is a reference to something in the previous bowl of soup; maybe it's a Minor Typographical Hitch. Or maybe, and this is what I'm hoping for, because I don't want to have to look for Spicy 2, spontaneous response to what's offered in the moment is best and so on, or maybe it's a commonly used phrase denoting something I should be acquainted with. "British da"? It sounds rather general. But not quite general enough to make credible a phrase like "American da." A term w/o foreign analogues, then. But Bruce Townley is familiar with it although he encloses it in quotation marks. Shorthand for British dada perhaps? There's a lot of that around; enough to write articles about it in all the fanzines I haven't seen of late, anyway.

What a delight it is to be featured in the second sentence of a delightful fanzine. It makes ego-skanning a breeze, and this habit I've unfortunately retained from days of yore. Never was much good at it - I always missed the really interesting uses of my name, that first and most voracious time through any publication - but it became an automatic process anyway. Dreamt of fame and influence, like.

Cats are not fannish but okay, anyway. Cat people are fannish but not so very okay: consider T.S. Eliot, who wrote cat poems which could be taken as religious allegories and is now buried in Westminster Abbey. Caring for a cat, I've been told, is a lot like caring for a personalzine. But I don't have any clever punchline, unfortunately, to complete the comparison with. It's frustrating. And, as far as I'm concerned, cats and personalzines are also frustrating. Cat sand is very fannish and okay with anyone possessing taste. I believe there was even a personalzine, at one time, which had something to do with new cat sand and became prominent.

Leroy Kettle
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London, N16
United Kingdom

OK, Richard, when the trip you perpetually threaten British fandom with eventually takes place you can kick me on the head with one of those huge feet of yours. You see, I've got this list of things to do - my worry list, a sort of paper security blanket. On it I make a note of upcoming events so that they're not always churning around in my mind and keeping me from inventing new improved quips (or qupis if I was typing this) or confusing me when I try to pick my nose so that I put my eye out by mistake. The list goes Eat, Sleep, Drink, Drink some more, Shit, Write Rich Coad, Drink some more again, Eat, Sleep, Shit! I forgot to wrie Rich Coad, Pub my ish, Drink even more, And again, Avoid John Piggott's hands, Drink just a bit more, And now a lot more, Remember to write Rich Coad etc, etc. etc. I've been carrying Spicy 2 around in my blue folder of things to do ever since I got it. When I recieved those F&SF's & (specially) the Krazy Kat I did a whole worry list just consisting of Write Rich Coad. I blame the hot weather, of course. Thoughts melt at temperatures above 85° Centigrade or Fahrenheit or Kelvin or whatever we use in the Common Market now. I walked around for weeks with a little pool of thoughts quietly splashing just out of reach of my activity centre. Most of the thoughts weren't worth much anyway, but yours were lost in there too. Now the weather's settled down to whatever it's settled down to and the thoughts are back there sailing from one side of my head to the other & I've

realized what a bugger I've been to procrastinate so much with my ace buddy Rich "It might grow back" Coad. So here you are. A letter. Hand-written yet. (All the old crafts are still in use in England.) The appearance of Spicy 3 has inspired me to get out this crumpled old air-mail form specially for your benefit. The sudden & surprising appearance I should say. 2 fanzines in six weeks makes me wonder if you're really the lazy bugger whose enthusiasm for doing n nothing dragged 74 Eleanor Rd. down from it's previous state of mouldy, shit-ridden foulness. I remember your nose hooking itself round the door when I entered, twilight reflecting off your ever-increasing forehead, as you began moaning about lack of money, lack of skin on your knuckles from scrubbing floors, lack of understanding of Ulysses, lack of food because you'd spent all your few pennies on a copy of Ulysses, and just plain lack. ((Yup, them was the good ol' - um, er ,ah lets just say they were the old days.)) And this is what you want to return to? Still, this new vitality that gets two Spicies out in six weeks might well help. Not that vitality alone could get your ish pubbed over here. You'd need money & unless your vitality can get you a job as a film star or a footballer you'd do well to get your pubbing done in the States & make your reputation before returning here.

Talking of reputation, you seem to be making one already. judging from your letter column. While I thought Spicy 1 was very good, no. 2 didn't quite click with me. You seemed to getting a bit heavy. Is that the right word? It was still a better fanzine than most - yes, certainly than most - in Britain & one of the two most enjoyable I get from the States, but compared to no. 1 it was a little dissappointing. No. 3 is much better. Good stuff by you & a good letter column, tho it's beginning to get a bit excessive proportionally between locs & editorial.

((So there it is, the real reason for this shortened letter column. Roy Kettle says it's getting toobig and I need to ingratiate myself to him if SRT 6 is ever to appear.

In many ways, Roy, I think SRT 1 (now a rare collectors item) is my best ish. 2 was the result of having nothing to say but a desire to not disappear from the national consciousness. Things are better now, though.))

WAHF: TARAL WAYNE MACDONALD "Cats are bowling! Cats are bowling!" and that doesn't make much more sense with the explanation; GIL GALER whose pathetic attempts at viciousness are DNQ; SHERYL BIRK - HEAD who has moved to Box 11229, Alexandria, Va. 22312; BRUCE TOWNLEY who writes good stuff on music; JERRY KAUFMAN "I think Aljo Svoboda's letter deserves to be opposite your attempt at instant fan history."; BILL BREIDING who liked number 2 better; JOHN HALL who defines punk rock; RICK SNEARY who wonders if "The Earl of Ealing" is for real; TERRY HUGHES who is busy; LEE CARSON who wonders if the Cockes are still extant in the City. No.; RICHARD MCMAHON who, surprisingly, doesn't call me vile, base and revolting; ALAN BOSTICK who has moved to 46 Arboles, Irvine, Ca. 92715; GEORGE FLYNN who correctly deduces I wasn't at the Worldcon. Thanks to all who wrote. The rest of this page is yours, to do with as you wish.

"THIS IS SILLY"

were the reported words of Super Big Name Fan Grant Canfield when he was given his FAAN award and, indeed, his logic can't be faulted. Of the 100 or so people eligible to vote in the artists category a 35 voted for Grant. So thirty-five fans like his art, big deal. They could have all written and told him so, probably with more meaning than a cube with a broken duplicator on it. Even more silly, though, was the presentation of the awards at Westercon. Charles Burbee, legendary fannish wit, was told half an hour before the ceremony that he was to give the awards. As a result he hurtled through the list of nominees, without even giving those that were there a chance to stand and identify themselves, named the winner and handed the award to Jon Singer, with all the aplomb of a brakeless truck running down Nob Hill. Jim Shull collected the most applause for actually being there; Jon Singer was given all the other awards to transport to the winners. A sad fate for the award that Linda Bushyager (if no-one else) thinks will replace the fan Hugos. Which brings me abruptly to the point.

In a recent issue of Karass I was surprised to note that a motion was to be introduced at MAC to do away with fan hugos. Now, let me say at the outset that I think fanning is nothing to do with awards anyway, but if there are to be fanac awards then it seems that the Hugo should be the one. Quite aside from the annoying fact that if the fan categories were dropped it would leave me with nothing to do with my Hugo ballot but fold it into a paper airplane the Hugo is the prestige award of sf (although the mediocre continues to defeat the excellent with stunning regularity) and it's a nice idea to have the fans treated as the pros equals. There is, of course, the problem of fringe fans and neos voting in the fan categories with no real knowledge of the field, thus we get Locus, SFR & Alcol winning year after year. So, because of this, we should scrap fan Hugos? I don't think so. I've had this idea knocking around in my head for a couple of years now and it seems such an obvious solution to some of the problems, at least, that I am amazed nobody else has suggested it. Okay, now that I've got you all waiting in breathless anticipation, here it is: rather than drop certain categories, create new ones. Since it seems that the main

reason the big three keep winning is the number of fans who see them the best fanzine category could be broken down into Best Semi-pro & Best Fanzine, basing the distinction on circulation, with, say, a thousand being the dividing point. Of course, that's only workable in the zine category and we're still left with a horrid mess in areas like best writer, artist etc. Still, it would be a step in the right direction and I've never closed my mind to the idea of needing some basic qualifications to be eligible to vote in the fan categories. Anyone got any better idea s?



PETER ROBERTS FOR
TUFF, Y'HEAR!

GUILT

It seems that lately I have been seeing a lot of two distinct types of fanzine review columns. The first is a mere listing with, sometimes, mailing comments. This quite naturally, is the type of filler you're used to seeing in *Spicy Rat Tails*, cursory comments on zines worth more effort. The second phenomenon is a dissertation, usually chock full of pseudly blather about communication and freedom of expression, on just why we read fanzines. Although these cliches have an air of truth (and often a stench of "sincerity") about them, they suit me little better than the former type. Myself, I read zines because they're fun; from even the bad ones I derive enough enjoyment to put off "serious" reading while I read through the zine several times. Perhaps that shows some fannish innocence, the kind one expects from neos, but as far as I'm concerned, the day that zines become something I can merely appreciate, rather than enjoy, is the day I'll gaffiate. This is not to say, of course, that I am totally lacking in discrimination or bias in my zine reading. A magazine like Garth Danielson's hopelessly illiterate *Boowatt* is painful to read but still I do, many times over more often than not, and yet I don't consider myself any more masochistic than the next fellow. So why do I do it? Well, maybe there is something to the communication and free expression school of thought. But if it wasn't any fun all the freely expressive, communicative people in the world couldn't get me to give a shit.

True Rat Ate, LeRoy Kettle, 43 Chesholm Rd., London N.16 UK

Once again Roy Kettle has done it. As regular readers of this broadsheet will know my praise of LRAKs writing skills knows no bounds, to his endless embarrassment. To avoid this excessive esteem Roy = determined to turn his personalzine into a faanish fanzine allowing himself a chance of second rate articles, more general mediocrity and less embarrassing sycophancy. Of course his "mates" (British for "pals" generally of a dubious (low-born) nature) didn't let him get away with it. Instead they talked Harry Bell out of the hatred he's had for Roy evr since that infamous room-party (one of a serie at Tynecon where Roy leapt bodily into Harry's arms causing the spillage of precious droplets of Newcastle Brown and coaxed him into delivering one of the best covers he's ever done. A man that can write as well as Harry should not be able to such gorgeous drawing to o. Pardon me while I seethe jealously for a moment...

That's better. The interior is dominated by nineteen pages of Don West's excellent fanzine reviews. In a stream of consciousness Don explains the ideal famzine by taking a piece from this one and a piece from that one. The problem is, of course, length, nineteen pages of reviews, even though they be excellent ones, with no convenient breaking point is somewhat excessive, positively a glut in fact. The fact that the excess means less of Roy's writing, much less, another drawback. Indeed, it is quite possible many readers came away feeling that TR was D. West's zine with funny bits and guest editorial by Roy Kettle Esq. I am assured, though, that no such overpowering presence will be allowed into the next ish. Don also contributes some delightful caricatures of various English fans in typical postures.

What else does the new and different True Rat have for us? Peter Roberts for one as an occasional columnist delving into his vast piles (Peter's room is cold and the chair is hard) of ancient fan-

zines to tell us what our forebears were really like before they decided they could cadge more free drinks by retiring to FAPA. Peter is one of the few genuinely witty writers in fandom. Each choice of phrase and word is so carefully made that the resultant grace and ease of style seems a breeze to achieve. (More jealous seething here) In his article Peter takes those dull little people you read about in The Immortal Storm and, amazingly, shows that they were quite fannish. It's got proof and all.

Grah Charnock and John Brosnan both write on Mancon, possibly the most reported con in fandoms history. Grah has apparently succumbed to terminal paranoia at all cons since Seacon which made his report seem to much a re-write of the earlier Novacon report in Vibrator. Brosnan, on the other hand, though all of his writing is bitingly sarcastic, never seems to pale. His conrep may well be the most objective one available. (Still more j.s.)

Finally there is Roy his self. His editorial deals, in part, with the discomfort he feels in sharing his zine with such a wealth of talent, a feeling I hope will pass quickly. As it turns out, the main thing missing from this ish is Roy. He has a guarded and self conscious editorial followed by an all to brief flash of the kettle humor of old. Open Flie, Britain's most reliable newszine, is still there but the precocious satires of previous true Rat's are missing forced out by D. West's marathon zine reviews. Despite this, though, it is still, virtually to a word, the zine I would produce had I the contacts, the time and the duplicator. What higher praise can I give? Until the next ish I am going to sit here and seethe, very very jealously.

Checkpoint 74, Peter Roberts, 18 Westwood, Cofton. Starcross, Near Da wlish, Devon, UK

Along with his ridiculous new address Peter Roberts has regained the newszine he gave up over two years ago. In that time CP was competently, if not excitingly, edited by Darroll Pardoe who in turn gave it to Ian Maule who brought out a dozen or so horrendous issues. Back with Peter now, Checkpoint seems destined to once again become the delightful mix of fanish news and odd filler it once was. In this ish, for example, we have a listing of Odd Organizations including such Robertsian esoterica as the Daedalus Society which is dedicated to helping enthusiastic amateurs conquer space. Any zine which provides such arcane knowledge as this along with all the usual news is top line in my book. Good on yer, Pete.

Were I the type of strangely earnest and persistent fellow that many fans are I would undoubtedly carry on in like manner for ten more pages but I'm not so I won't. Just some listings of recent stuff that caught my eye: Mike Kring's Insipidness in Ash-Wing 19; Bob Shaw's Return of the Back Yard Spaceship in Maya 11; all of the Charnox v Unkled Shrewv; Dave Cockfield's dedication in Atropos; Brian Earl Brown's Cap Knickers in Brownian Motion 5; Mike Glicksohn's The Best is Yet To Come & Roy Kettles In Praise of Cats and Vodka in Xenium 2.6; Bruce Townley's inside cover & The Crew in Diehard 8; Karina Girsdansky's hand coloring & Redd Bogg's Fanzine Fable in Fanhistorica 1; Richard McMahon's editorial in Inverted Ear Trumpet 4; Simon Agree's De Kuypers Triple SEC in Sonoma CA.; Dave Langford's colophon and page number in TWLL-DDU 4; Ian Williams Preconvention Blues & Rob Jackson's Mancon Report in Goblin's Grotto 3; and a lot of others I'm to drunk to look for.....

APOLOGIES & ERRATA

Okay, so maybe appologies have no place in a fanzine. Look at what they did to Dave Cockfield. But I'm not going to apologise for my writing, hasty as some of it might have been. No, I'm apologizing for being so late. My intent was to publish this on October 3 so I could give all the British copies to my mother who left for London

October 10. A vast savings in postage (I send all the overseas copies air-mail) I could ill-afford to bypass. So why didn't I do it? Because of auto accidents, that's why. Yes my fun little MGB was attacked from behind by a vicious 49 Buick tank on Sept. 26. Due to British Leyland's anti-burst door locks and a tremendous amount of luck I wasn't badly hurt, but I still haven't felt quite up to the strain of typing for the past week. The insurance will give me enough cash to afford air-mail anyway.

You will have undoubtedly noticed the absence of musical notes in this ish. Well that's because I will be joining apa-lp. Anyone who is interested in reading my opinioted views of rock n roll just drop me a card and I'll send you a copy.

Next issue will continue my advance away from a personalzine by including a Worldcon report by Jerry Jacks. Also there should be some illoes by various of Jerry's massive number of friends in fandom.

Now a couple of late locs:

Merf Adamson Bad American beer seems quite avoidable.
14 St. James Close All you need is something like the
He don, Hull HU12 *BH CAMRA Guide - a list of good local brews.
 If there isn't one already, here's a
money making idea: compile a list, and get someone to publish it.
Two markets: Americans who don't like bad beer, and tourists who
don't like bad beer. For the dedication you applied yourself to such
a task with, you would go down in fannish history..

((A bloody good idea, that. But a lack of money prevents actual
personal sampling of all beers, travel costs being what they are.
I do, though, have a couple of friends who can travel free to
any US city and if I could interest them in it...))

Joseph Nicholas Look, there's no way your sf Fair could
2 Wilmot Way have been worse than Mancon 5 of which
Camberly, Surrey you have doubtless heard by now. Was it
GU15 1Ja awful? It was dire, an experience never
 to be repeated. And it was actually
organised by fans! Fans, moreover, who, when they last held a con,
also managed to fuck it up for all concerned. So... what puzzles
me is why they were given a chance to do the same again? What's the
matter with us, that we don't learn from our mistakes? Never again
will a major con - or even a minor one with any luck - be held on
a unive ty campus.

((As noted elsewhere this ish a similar situation exists with
LA (or The Pit as we know it) and Westercons. Next years West-
ercon will be held on the campus of a Vancouver university an
aspect I look at with considerable tremulousness. It was, however,
a choice between that or the LA people who are no longer content
with ruining alternate cons (a north-south rotation) but have
decided to try Northern California cons with resultant messes
like 75's Oaklacon.)) The end. No shit. Really. This is it.



Michael Fabrick Caulfield 6-15-76