

WALK-BANGER



HANSEN '81

WALLBANGER

5

OCTOBER 1981

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Many thanks to Rob Hansen for the cover!

Alive !

and Recuperating ?

Eve Harvey

In my last issue I was, as are many people at the present time, bemoaning the current state of fandom - fanzine fandom in particular. But, as usual, 'they' decided to prove me wrong and over the past couple of months there has been a resurgence of vitality. Whenever a group of fans get together these days there is, once again, talk of fanzines; people are even distributing their latest ish, or at least obtaining promises of submissions for their forthcoming extravaganza. Not only have we seen the return of Malcolm Edwards, but also the re-emergence of Epsilon and Stop Breaking Down. Even I have produced two issues in one year - not that I would place my efforts into the same class as the aforementioned, but it is symptomatic of the energy that is permeating fannish gatherings again.

Perhaps the recuperative period following Season (when, perhaps, faneds over-stretched themselves) is now over, or it could merely be the upturn following a cyclical slump which happens periodically and automatically. Whatever the reason, I personally am delighted to herald the change. If there is one disappointment, however, it is the fact that this resurgence is being led by the 'old guard' (Messrs Pickersgill, Edwards, Kettle, Hanson et al), but perhaps they are merely setting the stage for the new actors. At least there are examples of good fanzine editing for people to learn from, and the whole scene may change with a transfusion of new blood. I hope so. As I mentioned in W4, I look forward to newcomers producing "... their own zine in the same fashion as earlier..." but I do not mean, as Mike Ashley interpreted it, that I wish to see facsimile Shrews and Rats. By "in the same fashion", I was referring to the attitude towards fanzine production. I anticipate with relish a return to the atmosphere pervading fandom at that time - the desire and willingness to try their own efforts and risk the resultant censure/acclaim. It is not the content I want to bring back, although I do prefer that particular genre of fanzine, but the vitality - the fact that fandom felt alive and was kicking so vigorously that many people got off their backsides and did something. It's the active rather than passive enjoyment of fannish life by a majority that I remember with affection, like being swept along in a whirlwind.

Mind you, passivity has its lure and it is very difficult to motivate yourself to do something when there is no censure linked with not producing a single sheet - self-inflicted agony is what comes to mind frequently. Paul Williams wrote in response to W4 with a very lucid explanation of why he hasn't produced anything, but his explanation could equally be applied to any and all of us - we have all faced those problems, not just before the first ish, but (if you're anything like me) before every issue.

Paul Williams, 25 Caernarvon Place, Grove Park, Blackwood, Gwent

Your theme of the editorial startled me like a gun going off. It was no mean feat to get me to break from cover! When you asked why there are so few fanzines today and why newcomers are not inspired to produce their own zines, I felt caught out and somewhat ashamed. I don't feel like a schoolboy dragged up to give an account of their misbehaviour. They can cop out by saying "Don't know, Sir!" But I do know why I haven't got around to doing at least one.

I wouldn't like to comment too much about other's fanzine production or lack of it; but basically, it could be that the Recession just doesn't stimulate light-hearted thought. The main topics of general conversation at present tend to be money, unemployment and politics. Perhaps there isn't the optimism about to stimulate creative inspiration. Thatcher has turned the country into a grey and dreary place - without even any hope of Sgt Pepper's Band turning up to do a gig.

In a way, I have the means of producing a zine, except for the cover of course. I've got a Mechano No. 1 set duplicator, courtesy of Rob Hanson which has been known to work in the past, and I'd prefer to persevere with this devil device rather than try to get it done through the BSFA scheme because I believe that first attempts should be "home-grown" - provided that they're legible of course. However, I could well find that trying to do a large print run could be a disaster, in which case I'll have to think again. This isn't such a great problem because I'm reconciled to the fact that at best, once a year would be the most that I'd have something to say in an issue. I want to have some criterion of quality and I don't have any interest in just writing to fill out pages i.e. the what I've had for breakfast type of quickies. This is the problem. I have four possible articles which should make entertaining reading, and perhaps ought even to be a little humourous; but my attempts to actually put them down in words have been shoddy and embarrassing. Needless to say, I've done nothing conclusive.

The irksome thing is that I believe that, just as in Wales where the welsh-speakers claim that only those who can speak the language are truly welsh, so it follows that only those who produce zines are Trufans. As for being welsh, this doesn't bother me because I prefer to be British, but it's a different matter to be a fan. (Actually, I prefer to do illustrations, so I'm not a complete washout!) It has been tradition that fans are divided into those who write and those who intend to write - I just "intend to" more than most. It would be very disappointing to have a fall in the numbers of fanzines since these are the backbone of conventional (small c) fandom. God knows what media-SF fans aspire to ; perhaps they all want to be actors.

I think it's probably valid that the BSFA acts as a sink for activity which could have gone into fanzines, particularly for those who would otherwise have to produce their own zine to spread their ideas. The problem is that the "to and fro" of argument that regular zines encourage is not the usual type of fare that is suitable for a personalzine. Newcomers only familiar with BSFA jobs and taking them at face value, could be misled into thinking that fanzines should be critical reviews (a common publishing house mistake viz free review copies) or intellectual in content, and not "labours of love" for enjoyment and interest. Basically, I'm a romantic who likes to get an emotional kick out of book or film etc. Perhaps this kind of sentiment has no place in a BSFA job but it seems that it is the driving force to do your own fanzine because it causes the need to share your concepts and feelings with others who can appreciate them, even if they don't necessarily agree with them in detail. There must be some common inspiration

otherwise producing a zine would be just a systematic means of circulating a type of newsletter to a pen-friend club of strangers with nothing specific in common. Anyway, the long and short of it is that I know what I want to do in a fanzine and I know I ought to do it, but for a few lame excuses I haven't done it.

**** Don't worry, Paul. Once the initial step is made you're either cured or addicted. Either way the agony of "Shall I? Shan't I" disipates!

There were a couple of other letters on the subject of fandom at present that I'd like to extract from the letters column and put here.

Chuck Connor, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, Suffolk

Don't forget that the fans/neos/whatever have a different set of values, you said as much yourself in the lack of fanzines around today. Nobody talks zines anymore, nobody goes to the cinema, or listens much to the radio.

TV; the death of fanzines?

Well, not quite. But new people have new heroes, and when fans like Greg P. have been out of circulation for 3 (three) years then they can't expect to come in where they left off. Can they? Could you? Could anyone?

John Owen has just restarted up Crystal Ship - a very good production, and some of the articles are good - but all the material is from 1978/79, so nothing will be relateable to the newer fans. The old names are still the same, but the audience is full of new faces (who may or may not want to make a name for themselves).

Take it as it comes, that's what I say. Move with the times, and stop looking back is what Andy Darlington favours, and I have to agree with him.

Steve Green, 11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham

The dilemma you spotlight facing newcomers to fandom could be expanded upon; not only are the "golden age" fans refusing to repeat themselves in print, and leaving fanzine auctions as the only place to pick up on their old philosophies, but the instant any new fan has the misfortune to stumble across one of the discarded thoughts (in ignorance thinking the idea innovative) he or she is dismissed with a cynical "heard it all before".

I have a theory I toy with occasionally that in the same way as cells contain the essential blueprint for the entire body, so every fan has the potential to create fandom, given the right balance of time and cash. I can still recall, many years ago at school, sketching out ideas for a fanzine with no knowledge that the institution already existed, and had done for more than four decades. Like Columbus 'discovering' America centuries after the Vikings, I was quite prepared to be the inventor of sf fandom. It would not be surprising, therefore, for fans at similar stages in their 'evolution' today to come up with the same ideas as their 70s predecessors. (Like you I dislike the term 'golden age' and its implication that the participants are all dead; while I'm preped to admit many may look that way after a hectic room party, Tappen's appearance proves that Malcolm at least shouldn't be buried just yet...)

**** I'm sure Steve has a point there. I remember in the dim and distant past when John and I were editing that infamous, instantly forgettable rag Black Hole whilst at Leeds University, we devised this ingenious method of cutting the cost of electro-stencils. What we invented was the 'paste-in' method whereby you produce all your titles and artwork on one electro, using the full length, and then patch these into the spaces left on the typed stencils. Fantastic, we thought, aren't we clever! Then, when we moved down to London, our egos took a battering as our proud descriptions were met with "christ, I've been doing that for years!".



FIGURING IT OUT

What, they are asking in donnish Oxford, is an economist? Answer - a man who cannot see something work in practice without asking himself whether it would work in theory.

5-10-81

When I began to realise I had probably overstated the case in W4 in connection with the dearth of new activists in the fannish world of the 1980s, I devised the plan to include in this issue as much writing by these newcomers as I could. As usual most of the promises never materialised, but I did receive two submissions.

The first is by Roy Macinski, a name that is not well-known outside BSFA circles since he only became aware of 'fandom' through Seacon. He is intending, however, to produce his own zine in an attempt to make his mark. I emphasise his since he has the strength to want to do it his way - a publication which is likely to be far more sercon than might have been anticipated considering his "fannishness" and his circle of friends, who could be typecast as "fannish fans".

Thus, in one fell swoop, it would appear that Roy has destroyed all my arguments in Wallbanger 4 - here is someone whose first contact with fandom was via the BSFA; here is someone who has become increasingly active in said organisation; but here is a neo who is following the 70s tradition of 'find out what's going on and then contribute to the scene by doing your own'. Unfortunately, however, I feel he is the exception (or at least one of them) that proves the rule - and he has still to get past the intention stage. Whether anything from him every hits the news-stands is still to be seen.

Still, this is a first for him, the first time he has produced anything which has appeared outside of a BSFA publication.

Chris, Capital &

Spontaneity

ROY MACINSKI

I guess it is fair to say that we all carry, locked in our minds, personal emotions linked to certain words and phrases. For me the phrase "culture shock" will always bring to mind walking through the doors of the Metropole Hotel in Brighton whilst it was hosting Seacon '79. I had heard of Seacon the Sunday before through an interview that Chris Priest had given on Capital Radio; the more Chris talked about the convention, the deeper my resolve became that I must attend, by hook or by crook, this exciting event - and yet in no way did Chris's interview fully prepare me for what was to greet me at the Metropole. I had been an avid reader of SF since my early teens and to suddenly discover this whole new world came as a somewhat unsettling and traumatic shock experience. I spent the best part of my time there walking around in something of a daze, trying and, for the most part failing, to take it all in. The fact that you could walk down a corridor and trip over a world famous author, or walk into a programme room and experience a serious discussion on SF, seemed itself a novelty. On a day-to-day basis I spent most of my time rushing around trying to cram in as many of the programme items as I possibly could and so, for me, Seacon '79 was an academic experience - indeed, it hardly occurred to me that there was a social element and that this element could be more important than the programme items.

Whilst at the convention I joined the BSFA - a year later this was to prove of crucial importance.

After the convention had finished and whilst I was still trying to digest all that I had experienced, I received my first mailing from the BSFA. I remember tearing the packet open and eagerly reading everything that was contained therein, even the flyers; and perhaps for the first time I started to glimpse the full totality of British fandom. Matrix in particular shone a thin pencil of light on the various aspects of fandom - it seemed to list an almost endless string of conventions, groups and societies dotted the length and breadth of the country and it even invited the humble member to write in and express his opinions. As the months followed and I received further mailings more names became familiar to me; I kept reading about John and Eve Harvey, Joe Nicholas, Alan Dorey, Kev Smith and many others, but very rarely did these names seem to take on any character or individual personality.

Some 8 months later I attended my first British Eastercon - this was Albacon 80 - a convention which, I must admit, I thoroughly enjoyed. Although I was aware by now that there was much more of a social element involved in fandom I found, personally speaking, that Albacon was as much of an academic as opposed to a social experience for me as Seacon had been - but this was mainly due to barriers which I had erected myself. Whilst wandering around

the Albany Hotel I stumbled across a number of groups of people who quite evidently knew each other and knew each other well. Being rather lacking in self-confidence I could never quite find enough of the impetus and courage to break into one of these groups and try to integrate myself within it.

In retrospect, this first year after Seacon was something like trying to discern the outline of the objects lying in a room lit by a dim candle. If one looked closely one could occasionally discern their shape or form and some of the coarser detail, but by and large the objects and aspects of the room remained featureless, lacking colour and finer detail. The turning point was to come in September of 1980 with the BSFA's first regular meeting at the Rutland in Hammersmith. Spurred on by a friend of mine we decided that this might be a good way in which to at last meet some of the people whom we had been reading about over the past year or so. As soon as I walked into the upstairs room at the pub I immediately fell into the atmosphere, for here was an event primarily designed for newcomers to meet other people - newcomers like themselves and old hands too. It was here that I was to meet John Harvey, Alan Dorey and Joseph Nicholas for the first time. At last the light in the room started to become brighter; the names that I had become so familiar with started to become more than just names, they became people, characters with their own personalities, attitudes and tastes. Well, one thing led to another, the first of which was the BSFA mailings. I live quite locally to Reading so it was relatively easy for me to go along and it was from my first attendances at these sessions that I started to appreciate the phenomenal amount of work that goes into producing something like the BSFA publications. After my first mailing session came my very first One Tun and with it I found myself starting to socialise more with the people I had come to know. Over the months that were to come these people were to become more than just names, they were to become friends.

It is difficult when something has made such a big impact on you as fandom has upon me, to break all the emotional ties, stand back and look at the subject in a cold and analytical light, but looking back on that first year now since that crucial breakthrough point, certain aspects of my experience spring to mind. Perhaps the most vivid impression is how remarkably friendly and affable fannish people are. It makes my initial period of hesitation and uncertainty seem even more unfounded. Because fannish people, by and large, are so friendly and so giving, it perhaps brings into sharp relief all the more the people who do not share this attribute. I have begun to realise, too, that fans are incessant communicators - they love to express their ideas and opinions on subjects, whether it be verbally or in a written form and I soon found myself, much to my great surprise, being swept along by this love of expression and communication.

My first year in fandom has taught me two important lessons: one, there is no shame in trying; and two, you only get out of something that which you are prepared to put in. Taking the first point, there is no way that I would consider myself a good writer - an opinion that you may have come to already by reading this article. Over the year or so that I have had material published I have never been truly happy with anything in its printed form. But what the hell, very few of us are fortunate enough to be Chris Priests or Robert Holdstocks and not all of us, when setting pen to paper for the very first time, can turn out a literary masterpiece. But I am going to try, nonetheless. After all, practice makes perfect and as long as I recognize my flaws and imperfections and fight against them I will hopefully learn from my mistakes and improve. As I said before, there is no shame in trying, but there is shame in not trying for fear of failure.

On the second point, fandom is a two-way inter-reaction between the individual and the society that it represents. Fandom, if you let it, can greatly enrich and enhance the quality of your life, but it can have an even greater impact if you are prepared to put into it as well as take from it and it is with this in mind that I have tried to become as active as I possibly can within the short period of time in which I have been in fandom. You have to put effort into forming, shaping and strengthening a relationship. You cannot expect the people you are meeting to put in all of the effort, they have to come halfway to meet you and you have to go halfway to meet them. I guess fandom has had one lasting effect upon my character, for whilst I would still say that I am somewhat reserved, it has helped me to overcome my shyness and changed my attitude towards meeting people.

The things I have mentioned so far have been very positive personal responses, but are there any particular aspects which I could point towards as being negative? Well, there is one that does spring to mind and that is, for a group of people who pride themselves on their openmindedness - for surely this is the essence of the science fictional mind, its willingness to accept new ideas, concepts, tastes and opinions - fannish people can display an extraordinary amount of intolerance and hostility towards other groups, their tastes and their attitudes. This is best exemplified by the 'Trufan', as it were, attitude towards the fringe groups. It can also manifest itself in some people's attitudes towards others' particular tastes, for example in writers and books. So what if I happen to think that Arthur C Clarke isn't that bad a writer and yes, goddammit, I happen to have enjoyed Rinworld; argue with me if you will as to why you feel these opinions and attitudes are mistaken, all that I ask is that you don't look down on me from your Mount Olympan viewpoint. I have also noticed that whilst fandom is an extremely tightly knit group, there can be a certain amount of hostility between its individual groups, isolated more in geographic terms than in emotional and intellectual terms. This has illustrated itself by, from time to time, some very petty and childish bickering between the various factions of fandom. It could be argued that whilst fandom is largely white and middle class, it is a relatively accurate mirror of society at large and since society at large is currently attempting to do its best to tear itself to pieces, then fandom should naturally do the same; but I have never been that much of a pessimist or fatalist when concerned with man's attitude towards his fellow man.

These points, though, are relatively minor when stacked up against fandom's more positive elements and attributes to the individuals who make it. All in all, this past year has been a marvellous experience for me. It has given me a lot and it has also changed me - changed me for the better in many ways. It has changed my attitudes intellectually, it has changed my attitudes towards aspects outside of fandom but, more important than any of these elements, it has given me people - it has given me friends.

Whilst I look back on my first real year in fandom, two years since my initial discovery, I feel slightly sad and melancholy. The reason for this is that, given the string of coincidences which led to my initial discovery: the chance that I would happen to turn on the radio; the chance that I would happen to casually tune into Capital; the chance that Chris Priest would be giving his interview; the chance that Seacon '79, a worldcon, was being held in this country - and perhaps because it is only a relatively short period of time since my entry into fandom, I cannot help but wonder about the hundreds, possibly thousands of people who are wandering the streets of this land who would be similarly, or possibly even more enriched by fandom than I have been. I cannot help but feel a little sad that we will never have the opportunity of meeting these people.

With evangelists like Roy, who needs Billy Graham!

Seriously though, whilst I was typing the foregoing, it brought back memories of my first encounter with fandom, and a mind-boggling experience it was too. I think it's rather sad that these feelings tend to be forgotten with the passing of the years and, to a certain extent, scorn is poured on "neos" who are living through that mind-shattering experience. All too often we feign a blase attitude when we should really be encouraging them, remembering our own initial impressions instead of boosting our own egos at their expense.

I also began wondering what my life would be like now if John and I hadn't attended the Sunderland Arts Council extravaganza "Beyond This Horizon" back in 1973. To be honest I can't. Nearly all our spare time is spent in activities that, in one way or another, are linked to SF fandom - if not in actual fanac, then in meeting and drinking with friends we have met through SF. Of course we would have other friends and interests, but it is difficult to imagine anything so all-encompassing and fulfilling. I don't even think I would be the same person, since fandom has raised my ambitions and prompted me to attempt things I would never have considered previously. I'm sure I've benefitted from the attempt to satisfy these aspirations.

Hell, if fanac didn't keep me busy I might have decided to have children by now. (At that suggestion, John frantically started organising Wallbanger 6 for me!)

After the trials and tribulations of Seacon, the majority of my fannish activity until my recent 'rejuvenation' (who says life begins at 40), was connected with some aspect of the BSFA and therefore most of the new friends John and I have met recently have been introduced via that route.

Roy Macinski was one, Martyn Taylor is another. He, like Roy, is mostly unknown outside of the BSFA. In fact, I had never heard of him until one particular BSFA mailing session when Roy started raving about this 'person' Taylor and what was going to be done to him - something to do with a Black & Decker and Martyn's kneecaps, I seem to remember. Now Roy is a quiet, unassuming guy normally, so this spurt of viciousness came as quite a revelation. Apparently one of Roy's reviews in Vector had been bounced in favour of this 'Taylor' man.

At a One Tun I had the opportunity of meeting this ogre and was pleasantly surprised to find that not only was he sporting one head, but since he'd eaten tea before coming out, young children in the vicinity were safe. In fact he seemed quite a nice guy and, what's more, he worked in the City. Yet another person I could con into buying me lunch!

Over a drink at one of the BSFA's Rutland meetings I persuaded him to write something for me, and lo and behold, at the following Surrey Limpwrist he handed me a white envelope containing the following. This, like the previous piece, is unusual since Martyn normally appears writing interesting, though serious, reviews and articles in Vector and Matrix, but here is a fannish Martyn..... one I prefer.

Here, also, is another answer to the question I posed in Wallbanger 4 - where are they now?

Urban Renewal

MARTYN TAYLOR

One small step for mankind, and nearly a fractured kneecap for me.

It was one of those moments, the sort of moment that occurs only in the very worst nightmare, usually immediately before you discover yourself lying awake in a lake of cold sweat with a silent scream on your lips and your hands groping for a convenient womb to which to return. In such moments strong men weep. If I had been a strong man I would have wept, I don't mind admitting.

There I was, minding my own business if you please, leaning insouciantly on the bar trying to attract the barmaid's attention with a nonchalantly proffered five pound note. What I wanted to do was swap some of that money for a pint glass full of the coloured water that masquerades as beer in The Rutland. She was definitely ignoring me. To pass the time I smiled at Eve (I had written permission from John. Honest!) She smiled back at me, somewhat vaguely. The barmaid began to move in my direction. My lips grew dry. Then Eve looked up from her Southern Comfort and transfixed me with a baleful glare. A dream came true as I discovered exactly how a butterfly feels in the moment its wings are pinned.

"You promised to write something for me, for Wallbanger!"
Rasped Eve, as only Eve can rasp.

"I did?" I croaked. My knees turned to jelly as my backbone looked for the backdoor, ostensibly in search of a runcible spoon. Feverishly I tried to remember which tooth it was that held the suicide capsule.

"Yes, you did. Don't deny it. You promised something gay, light-hearted and witty."

(Gay? Light-hearted! Witty...! Who did Eve think I was, Greg Pickersgill?)

'Improvise, boy, improvise' I thought, my mind racing. Fortunately I caught up with it just inside the door and dragged it back, kicking and wriggling.

"Okay, boss, what do you want me writing about, how many words?"

Eve shrugged. "Oh, it doesn't matter, anything you like. You can even write about skiffy ... if you like."

There was a definite something in the tone of her eye that was a dead giveaway. Delivery of one of my normal sercon pieces would not be received with exactly unalloyed enthusiasm. I was desperate

"But Eve ... listen to me; be reasonable ... you're in the middle of moving. You've just started a new job where they all speak nothing but Japanese ..." ('... and you've just buggered up a brand new IBM electronic...' I added parenthetically, and silently.) It was clear from her expression that I was fighting a losing campaign, so I weighed in with a blow I knew was sneaky, but I hoped it would be the clincher. "Besides, madam Chairman,

with Channelcon so nearly upon us should you really be concerning yourself with anything so trivial as your own fanzine?"

My life flashed before my eyes in a series of still frames as more than one pair of hands took me gently by the throat.

"Okay, okay, you got it, anything you say, boss!"

I was trapped, and I knew it. Hoist by my own petard and no two ways about it. Silently I promised myself to take back my ego and see if I could get a new one, one that would not get me into trouble. Maybe I should have been born Attila the Hun. I bet he never had things like that happen to him. Wearily I trudged back upstairs where Joseph was trying - with increasing desperation - to auction off a pile of Star Trek books that not even Paul Turner would buy. There was only one course of action for me to take, but the windows were locked and, anyway, the tide was low.

Saturday dawned. So far as I was concerned it need not have made the effort. Thinking about going out drinking again in the evening made me give serious consideration to lying down and dying. I gazed in stupefaction at the books Joseph had given me to review. I had previously expressed a willingness to read even rubbish in the noble cause of the BSFA (there is no end to my willingness to get books for free!) ... but a Heinlein juvenile...! The man has no scruples, no scruples whatsoever. I resolved to write a favourable review, just for revenge.

The question remained. What could I write for Eve? What about my formative experiences? Ah ... yes ... she had specified something gay, light-hearted and witty. It was my formative experiences that made me the solemn, cerebral, overweight, would-be ascetic ever in search of inner meaning that I know and love so well. By and large my recalled formative experiences had all the gaiety, lightness of heart and wit of 'The Naked Lunch'. Besides, I'm doing my own fanzine (real soon now, naturally) and I need some material for that. What else was there? The Dylan gig ... hmmm, yes. I had already written a piece - intended for RAA - but ... but, no, it turns into a discussion of nostalgia and the artist. Nothing much gay, light-hearted and witty about that. By then I was growing desperate, the more so as I watched England wickets fall with a sickening regularity. Somewhere deep within my brain a small, insignificant component failed and I knew nothing more until later, much later.

I found myself standing at a bus stop. Well, you do if you want to catch a bus, don't you. The 171 had done it's customary Sunday morning vanishing trick and I was waiting with ill-concealed annoyance for the next convoy from Forest Hill (it is a fact that London Transport 171 buses seem to be incapable of travelling about the capital in less than pairs. Whether this is for protection or for the purposes of mechanistic copulation must remain moot pending further research). To while away the hours I watched the passing parade of humanity, and the people too. One of that crop headed sub species of the young known as 'Skins' slouched towards us, chewing casually on a Coke can. He joined the queue in the manner of this sub species... by pushing in at the front. After a short period of nearly silent mastication he decided that he had extracted all possible nutrition from the can and tossed it down at my feet.

Whatever possessed me at that moment I do not know. Eyewitnesses report that I pointed out to the young ... man ... that there was a wastebasket attached to the post against which he was supporting himself, and that he would have expended less energy putting the can in there than by throwing it onto

the ground.

He snittered, and wiped the drool from his chin. The queue behind me began to stir, restlessly. While this bus stop was outside a cop shop it was boarded up like all the other shops in the area and the boys in blue from inside had gone for a day trip to the fascist rally at Smithfield. Had we been outside McNee Towers it would have made not the least difference to me. I was past rotation point, irrevocably committed with all lights showing green, and all that jazz. I asked the youth, with all the politeness at my command, to pick up the can and put it in the bin.

He laughed, and I heard the sound of running feet behind me. I found myself alone in a queue of two, just him and me. We waited. A trickle of saliva appeared at the corner of his mouth. His eyes had the strangely unfocussed look so prevalent amongst the sub species. Then, in what was a blinding flash of intuition, I saw that I had been approaching the problem from entirely the wrong direction. I had seen more comprehension and animation in a mackerel on a fishmonger's slab than I saw in his face. The fact was that he did not know what I was talking about. I felt cold rage in my belly - or it might have had something to do with my having foregone breakfast in anticipation of a lavish lunch, a lunch that my brother and his family would eat without me unless I got up to Stamford Hill fairly smartish. I stepped up close to the youth and put my fist an inch from his nose.

"Pick that can up or I'll kick your bloody head in!" I growled.
I may not look like Joe Frazier, but I can look mean when the mood is on me.

We stood for a long, long moment, during which I realised that he just might have a few of his mates waiting around the corner. It was not a comforting thought. Then a small, distant light flickered in his eyes, and I knew that he understood. All I had had to do was present him with the argument in terms he could comprehend. Grunting and grinning the while he bent down and picked up the can before dropping it, not without some ceremony, into the wastebin. It was at that moment a 171 pulled up at the stop and I jumped aboard before he had time to change his mind and deposit the can somewhere in the region of my rectum. It is a long ride from Camberwell to Manor House and it took every second of it for my heart to stop its impression of a runaway trip hammer in heat.

I mean, he might have had his mates around the corner, mightn't he.

But what does this tale prove, I hear you ask, and I will tell you. We live in a time of constant and accelerating change. Not a one of us can go to sleep absolutely confident that we will not wake to discover that 'they' have replaced us with a low running cost machine. Our world is mutating ... sorry, evolving ... before our very eyes and it is not easy for us. The speed of change is so bewildering that one in four of us will require major psychiatric help during our lifetime. The day may soon dawn when we require a Ph.D in electronic engineering simply to tie our shoes. In such a world I find it immensely reassuring that, in the words of the ad, while times change values don't, and there is still a place for the Birmingham spanner of unreasoning threats of physical violence.

Don't you?

When I first took over the editorship of Wallbanger myself (issue 2), it was not the result of any rift between John and I, merely my anger at only having one vote between the two of us in the Nova Award. That was the year Gross Encounters won by 1 vote! If I am the editor, and John merely a contributor, we have two votes.

Even so, I have taken the job seriously - obviously getting help from John, picking his brains etc - but it has been, fundamentally, my fanzine, reflecting my views, feelings, likes and dislikes. Interestingly, though, the majority of locs I received on W4 were addressed to both of us. Ho, hum.

At least now I don't mind, at one time I would have been very upset. This was when we first entered fandom, and I was feeling very unsure about my ability to stand on my own two feet (metaphorically speaking, of course) - I was unsure about the value of what I had to contribute, everyone around us seemed to know so much more than I did. At the same time, however, I was also suffering the trauma of being viewed merely as one half of the John-and-Eve collective beast. Now I feel more confident in my own right in fandom, it doesn't matter as much if I'm thought of as Mrs John, or the tail end of the John-and-Eve panto horse. Or maybe it isn't as contradictory as it appears - I'm sure Dr Rob would be able to explain it all.

Still, enough of this, onto John's contribution for my fanzine.

Diary of a Househusband

JOHN HARVEY

Tuesday, 13th October

My dreams were disturbed by a vulgar ringing - time for Eve to make my breakfast. I had to remind her she'd be late for work if she didn't hurry. Two eggs, bacon, sausage, mushrooms, tomatoes and fried bread, yummy! I think I'll have smoked mackerel tomorrow. Shame Eve had to rush off to work before she could have any.

I must have dozed off since the next thing I knew it was 10.30. I dressed in a panic - the pubs were opening soon. A gentle stroll round the corner and I was in the bar. I actually had to buy my own first drink, but the place soon filled and I kept my hands out of my pockets; ex-workmates could always be relied upon for free drinks.

3 p.m. arrived and I was feeling quite mellow (as a newt), so I meandered home and decided a catnap was called for.

I awoke to find Eve's smiling face, steak & chips and a bottle of Chateau Rothschild. Ah, a sweet life, sweet life.

"Go and make some tea, John, it's 7.30 a.m."

My dreams were disturbed by Eve's foot as she eased me out of bed. God, another

morning. Eve rolled over whilst I wandered through an out-of-focus world in search of a dressing gown and my glasses.

"It's bloody well raining again."

When I returned Eve had managed to summon up the strength to drink the tea. Together we dressed and then crawled up the hill to the local railway station. On the way there I pretend I'm on my way to my high-powered job in the City. I religiously buy a copy of the Daily Telegraph, kiss Eve goodbye and slink back home to scan the job pages and see what that Maggie woman has been up to. Then time to give Eve's dad his breakfast and I start on today's tasks - washing day today, ho hum!

Wednesday, 14th October

It's my birthday - breakfasted on tea and toast in bed; cards and presents too! A new pickup cartridge for my stereo and 'Pick of Punch' from Eve, a £10 cheque from my mum & dad, and a promise of new shoes from Eve's dad.

So here I am, 33 and still no job. It's strange the ambivalent attitude I have towards my unemployment. Not having a job can be very frustrating and every time I go to sign on I think "that must be the last time" since at present you only sign on once a month. It's difficult to describe the feeling of being without a job for the first time in your life. I don't feel any social pressures (or I try to ignore them), financially Eve and I manage (although I don't know how) and the freedom to do what I like when I like is tremendous. But I would like a full-time job again.

Thursday, 15th October

An extra birthday present arrived today in the form of a cheque from BOC, my ex-employers. Surprised? Well, in fact, I knew it was coming and it was all due to that nice woman from ACAS. The reason for BOC's benevolence goes back to my article in W4 in which the dreadful truth about my fall from grace was revealed. Finding myself indignantly in the outer darkness, I decided something would 'have to be done about it'. Together with my partner in crime, Ashley, we decided to go to the Industrial Tribunal who were bound to feel sympathetic about the way we'd been mistreated - just like everybody else who'd heard the tale.

So, forms and booklets were obtained, Ashley organised a solicitor friend to act for him and I sought the aid of a local legal firm. "Oh yes," my advisor said, "really bad; tut, tut. I reckon I could get a couple of grand for you. Only cost you £200 or so. You could do all right on your own though - court's sympathy to the lone man fighting the big multi-national and all that."

All this boosted Eve and I significantly in the few weeks after the fateful event. Consulting the information from the Tribunal, Ashley and I found we had 3 months in which to lodge our complaint. No rush, so we sat back and concentrated on finding new jobs. Ashley managed to con his way into BOC's only rivals, Air Products, and I managed to go to quite a few interviews. Time passed, Eve and I successfully hung on to the offer of a new mortgage (even though there was only one salary now, of course), and eventually we moved to spacious premises in Harrow Road. Then one day I awoke and realised that there were only 3 days left to submit my application. I completed the form and had it in the post by 10 a.m. (I had, in my meanness and fear of losing money, decided against using the services of a solicitor.)

The realisation of what was to come sent a chill through me as I opened the official letter from the Office for Industrial Tribunals, acknowledging

my application and setting a date for the hearing. Gulp, what have I let myself in for? It was at this point that the aforementioned nice lady from ACAS (Mrs Graham) entered the fray to act as a go-between. Would I accept my job back? Did I want compensation? 'Gimme the money' I boldly said. "Well, I don't think you've a very strong case", she said encouragingly, "but I'll see if BOC will make a settlement".

Ashley and I started to put our heads together. Witnesses? We'll have to get our stories straight, the best angles to stress and answers to awkward questions - all were discussed.

About a week later the ACAS woman phoned, BOC weren't interested, they were going to fight. I was beginning to think I needed some weapons for the battle, after all BOC were fielding legal muscle against poor little me. A chance remark by Chris Atkinson to Eve gave me an avenue for advice, Roy Kettle used to work as a clerk to the Tribunals. I managed to corner him early enough at the One Tun and gave him an earbashing with full details. "Sounds a little slim to me", he said, filling me with glee, "you should get some expert advice."

I left him to sort out some phone numbers for me to contact. The next night (2 weeks to the day before the hearing) Ashley phoned to say he was withdrawing. I was dumbfounded and the image of a lone crusader was rapidly losing its appeal. Ashley explained in the pub that night that he felt his case was so poor (it was weaker than mine) it could backfire in his face and he could lose a second job within 4 months. Eve and I, after a heated discussion (i.e. a row), had decided that I must go through with it, what had I to lose? BOC references perhaps? Ashley and I had been promised good references when we left, so I didn't want to jeopardise that small benefit. A phone call to my contact in their personnel department soon put our minds at rest; no way would the Tribunal affect the references - "that would be unethical"!

In the meantime Roy had come through with the phone number of an organisation called the 'Free Representation Unit'. I lost no time in contacting them and shot round to Middle Temple with all my paperwork. The Free Representation Unit or FRU are a voluntary organisation of trainee barristers who 'do it' for the experience and due to restrictions imposed on their practices they specialise in Tribunals of all types. Now, the Inns and Temples have been the heart of English legal practice since time immemorial, and Middle Temple is one of the most hallowed. Goodness knows how old it is - it runs from the Embankment through to the west end of Fleet Street. So I wandered up its narrow, cobbled street looking for No. 3 Middle Temple Court. Eventually I found a door with, amongst a host of other labels, 'FRU - 1st Floor'. The stairs were narrow & twisty, the 1st floor door hung in a warped frame and inside plaster flaked off the walls onto the bare floorboards. I almost expected to find Bob Cratchit sitting, quill pen poised, at a tall clerical desk. The desks were rather old but of more conventional height and quite a young guy sat drinking coffee and chatting on the phone.

"Hi, I phoned up yesterday. Here's my paperwork."

"Oh," he replied and buried his head in the plethora of forms and letters.

Then he started asking searching questions. "Well, it looks rather thin ice, but leave it with me. I'll phone you." So I left it in his good hands.

A couple of days passed, I worried one of my ex-colleagues from BOC by

POMMES DETERRED

Crime writers looking for a new "angle" might do worse than check out Rostov province in souther Russia - where the police have started arresting potatoes. Imagine the scene:

"Cripes - it's the peelers!"

"Come quietly, mate, or you'll end up in the casserole sharpish. I want your name, breed, price per kilo and field of origin. And don't try any funny stuff. The one we picked up last night claiming to be King Edward got pretty badly sauteed while resisting arrest. Understand?"

The hapless potatoes knew that, once inside the station, they would be ruthlessly grilled until they spilled the beans...

Not, of course, that the story was quite like that - particularly the way Izvestia told it. According to the Russian newspaper, complaints have been received from Rostov citizens to the effect that the local police are impounding potato shipments on the order of the district council chairman, and enforcing sales to the state at a fraction of the private market rate. Still, it was a nice idea.

5-10-81

**** Best way I know of ensuring that inflation is kept under control! Don't let Maggie know.



One section of a fanzine that I, personally, do not turn to immediately I've extricated my fingers from the staples that invariably spring open at the mere sight of my delicate digits, is the letters column. Now this may seem rather inconsistent with the pleas many of you may remember from the dim and distant past when John and I were editing Matrix, but, putting aside all m.c.p. yearnings to mention that infamous trait of 'female logic', there is a difference between receiving comments on your own work and reading those on someone else's. Much as I enjoy intense, thoughtful discussions on the state of fandom, fanzines, Maggie Thatcher, John's hole in his sock - I prefer them vox vitalis rather than in the loc column of a fanzine several months after the initial article. For one's own fanzine matters are entirely different - the subject matter retains its immediateness.

One type of loc that will rivet me, however, is the inconsequential, usually humorous, anecdotal snippet - be it fact or fiction - that more often than not has been sparked off by something completely different in the last issue. Something that can stand on its own without reference to the magazine that initiated the idea.

That is why, when I received the following from Arnold Akien, I not only had to print it, but give it more prominence in the hope that it will elicit further response. So thanks Arnold.

The Hex in the Equation

ARNOLD AKIEN



A few years ago, when I was but a sweet and innocent child, I read a short SF story - well, that is to say that although I read a lot of SF stories, this particular one made a great impression on me. The basic premis of this tale was extremely simple - as is usually the case with SF short stories - and whilst I can recall neither its title nor its author, I do remember the idea that it was based on.

Insofar as I can recall, it was that everyone in the world has one PSI talent... the trouble is that these are so restricted and unusual that the majority of people never discover what their particular talent is. After all, if you were, say, an illiterate Indian peasant farmer and your talent was the ability to turn bottles of TIPP-EX into gold by reciting the phrase "Wallbanger is a rilly triffic fanzine" three times, your chances of discovering this talent would be extremely low.

Like I said, a simple idea - but an elegant and plausible one nevertheless. Alas, despite intermittent attempts over the years, I've been unable to discover my own particular latent PSI talent and until quite recently I had never caught anyone else displaying his/her paranormal ability in public. I say until recently because, at long last, I have incontrovertible proof of the possession - by someone I know and can identify - of limited paranormal power!

Take a look at the photograph - yes, I know John is on it! Please pay attention. Now, on the extreme right of the photo there is, you will notice, a handsome (Collins Shorter English Dictionary "handsome [han'-sum] a; generous [orig. = pleasant to handle]) bespectacled gentleman who has his mouth open! This might not, of itself, appear very significant. After

all, everyone has to open his mouth sometimes and even the most shy and reticent of people, like, say, Jerry Pournelle, will occasionally speak and thus might appear in a photo with his mouth open. However, in every photograph that I have taken in which this handsome fellow ("handsome" - moderately large, as in "a handsome gift") appears he has his mouth open. Moreover, in every photograph I have ever seen of this man, whom we shall call experimental subject X, he has his mouth open. This - as the Astral League might say - proves it. We must either believe that subject X has his mouth open most of the time (no doubt materialistic sceptics will claim that his facial posture is due to the relentless forces of evolution - that nature has selectively developed a fan who is always in a position to pour a drink down his gullet - arrant nonsensical thinking which will yet be the downfall of mankind) or. . . we have here the first documentary proof of the existence, and use, of a limited para-normal power!

Just consider the implications of the employment of this astounding PSI talent: subject X must detect that a camera is being aimed at him - some form of ESP perhaps - and then synchronise the movement of his jaw so that his mouth is open when the camera's shutter opens... at a speed that could reach one 2,000th of a second! How does he do it? Well, I'm afraid I can't answer that question: up to the present time subject X is the only known possessor of limited oral para-normal powers (or LOPPs) and, if the original theory holds good, it appears probable that only subject X has LOPPs - and since we have only one subject with this ability, it seems unlikely that we will ever discover precisely how his miraculous power works.

It would be all too easy to abandon this promising field of scientific enquiry in view of the fact that one can scarcely cut a whole new facet on the diamond-hard surface of para-psychology with only one experimental proof. We do however have an alternative: it would seem unlikely that - even given the tremendous obstacles in the path of anyone who would discover his psychic endowment - only one person in fandom is able to use a limited para-normal power... it might well be that you have observed a fan causing a phenomenon which cannot be explained in terms of normal physical abilities, but until now you have been afraid to come forward for fear of ridicule.

It is a well-known fact that just one report of peculiar and inexplicable phenomena will call forth seemingly interminable reports of similar phenomena like, say, the never-ending tidings of drunken behaviour at cons. At one time fans were supposed to be sober harbingers of the new age of scientific enlightenment through SF; then, way back in the 30s, one report of a drunken fan appeared in a primitive fanzine. POW! - the image was broken! More reports appeared of similar drunken fan phenomena until we have reached the point where much space is given up in fanzines to sober observation of phenomenal drunkenness. Given this noble precedent it is reasonable to suppose that, thanks to my revelation of the extraordinary ability of subject X, fans who have hitherto kept quiet about similar, though of course not identical, demonstrations of inexplicable powers by otherwise normal individuals, will come forward.

I suggest that all those who have observed demonstrations of the use of para-normal powers by fans should despatch their dramatic revelations to:

Eve, Bureau of Outre Observations (B.O.O.)
c/o Wallbanger.

Shaken but not Stirred

BRIAN SMITH

At first it had seemed just like any other meeting. The Rutland was beginning to fill up with the usual motley crew of Hammersmith denizens, the BSFA had staked out its usual territory, and the familiar, blood-chilling crunch of cue butt on bone was already drifting across from the bar billiards table. As for me, I was wedged safely in the corner, working my way down a curiously drinkable pint of Watneys London and chatting to fannish megastar and infamous Bo Derek lookalike Eve Harvey. I think it was after the conversation had turned away from the giant plastic scorpion on top of the bar at the Hammersmith Odeon that the Harvey Wallbanger came up (metaphorically, I hasten to add). Finding that Eve didn't know the story behind the name, I made the fatal mistake of telling her what it was. As I was speaking, a feral light grew steadily in her eyes, not unlike that exhibited by Dave Langford when meeting someone whose life has not yet been enriched with a TAFF ballot. When I finished, Eve said sweetly, "Do you know a lot of those?" Warning bells began to tinkle distantly in my mind. "A few", I prevaricated, matching the statement with as insouciant a shrug as seemed feasible without actually spilling my beer. "Good!" said the Blonde One, turning her charisma up to heavy stun, "You can write me an article about it for Wallbanger!" For a single, mad instant I toyed with the idea of escape, but it was futile. Most good judges agree that resisting Eve in one of these moods is on a par with the Titanic shouldering aside icebergs, especially if she's taken the elementary precaution of blocking the exit. My fate was sealed.

Later on I began to wonder - how had I been manipulated so easily? Then a number of factors began to slot into place, and the conclusions I reached were terrifying. I thought of the various ways in which Eve has been changing her image. The contact lenses. The new hairstyles. Turning up at the Tun immaculately dressed on the flimsy pretext of having "just come from work". This had all the hallmarks of a Saatchi and Saatchi campaign! Quite clearly, being voted Cuddliest Fan and Most Lovable Fan at Silicon (I was robbed) had merely whetted her appetite. Even Channelcon itself is but a stepping stone to Higher Things. The final, clinching proof will come when letters from John Harvey begin to appear in Private Eye. I can see it all now . . .

Dear Kev,

What must you think of me? I tried to get Vector out on time for once, but E commandeered the duplicator to do another 10,000 Channelcon flyers. Mind you, as soon as the ink hit the stencil I sneaked up to the boxroom for a quick snort or twain, and one thing led to another, and the next thing I knew was the Boss rapping smartly on the door with my head going on about how I'd finished off the last hogshead of Southern Comfort that Ian Maule had confiscated for her. Absolute hell to pay, Kev, believe me!

And so on. And then the stage will be set for the final confrontation between the old, moribund mundane order and the new, vibrant fannish order, a stupendous

clash of giants which I predict will be known to history as the Evelyn War. Remember, you read it here first.

But I digress. Drink is what I am commanded to write about, and it would be more than my beard is worth to disobey. One curious thing my researches have revealed (apart from the astonishing connection between Steve Higgins and the House of Windsor, to which we shall return later) is that for a really pre-eminent and consistent body of absolute piss artists, one need look no further than the Church. Irish monks invented whiskey over a thousand years ago, and later spread it to Scotland (according to one tradition, by St Patrick). Every monastery used to produce its own booze, and consequently most of their inhabitants seem to have spent the Middle Ages lying under refectory tables. The only orders who still produce in a big way nowadays are the Carthusians, who make Chartreuse (named after La Grande Chartreuse, their monastery), and the Benedictines, who make (surprise!) Benedictine. It was a blind Benedictine monk called Dom Pierre Perignon (1638-1715) who invented the first true sparkling champagne, and had a vintage named after him by Moet et Chandon.

The men of God were active in America too. In 1791, the US Government levied a tax on whiskey for the first time (thereby following in the footsteps of governments as far back as that of King Hammurabi of Babylon, c.1750 BC). The farmers of Pennsylvania were outraged, and began to tar and feather tax collectors. The Whiskey Rebellion was born! George Washington assembled 15,000 militiamen, larger than any army involved in the American Revolution, to crush the insurgents. Over the next three years, many farmers moved away down the Ohio River to Kentucky, since the Government harassed them if they didn't pay the tax, and the rebels harassed them if they did. Their traditional crop of rye grew poorly in Kentucky, so they turned to corn, and began to distil corn whiskey. Enter the Reverend Elijah Craig, stage left. This Baptist minister worked out the proportions of the blend of rye and corn whiskies which later became known as bourbon (after Bourbon County, which was named after the French dynasty of kings), and that it matured best in charred oak barrels. It's a sobering thought that without the Whiskey Rebellion and the Rev. Craig, America's most famous whiskey might still be the original rye, which was called Monongahela. Imagine ordering that after a few doubles!

In the good old days, when most of the globe was a decent shade of pink, Britannia ruled the waves with hearts of oak and stomachs of rum. But then, one dark day in 1740, the rum ration was for the first time watered down. The architect of this monstrous decision was Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Vernon (1684-1757), known to his men as 'Old Grog', because of the splendid program coat that he wore on deck in all weathers. Immediately, his crew dubbed the foul concoction grog after him, which later spread to mean any cheap and nasty drink. Vernon claimed that the rum had been diluted to reduce brawling aboard ship, but I have a different theory. Consider; late the previous year, a squadron under Vernon's command had sacked the Spanish town of Porto Bello in Panama, during the War of Jenkin's Ear. All well and good - but two further attacks, on Cartagena in Colombia and Santiago de Cuba had been complete failures! Losing battles to the Spanish is admittedly not as bad as losing them to the French, but even so, this must have been a terrible blow to Vernon's pride. The only possible parallels today would be England's World Cup qualifier record and losing a Test match to New Zealand. Small wonder that he took it out on his men, and the next year went back to being MP for Penryn. A lesser man would have been firing the crew out of the starboard battery. And I imagine that his ghost nodded approval at the shoulder of Sir T O Gimlette, a naval surgeon who decided that neat gin was damaging the health of Her Majesty's officers, and in 1890

invented the mixture of gin and lime juice that was called the gimlet after him. And some people actually wonder why the Royal Navy is going to the dogs.....

Anyone who has read Pratt and de Camp's Gavagans Bar series will have come across the mixture of bourbon and vermouths called a Manhattan. This was invented in the 1870s by Sir Winston Churchill's mother at a society dinner in the Manhattan Club, which is what the drink is specifically named after. The club was of course named after the island, and as for the island - early in the 17th century, navigator Henry Hudson was poking around the coast of North America, looking for the North-West Passage and occasionally naming chunks of water after himself. Eventually, his crew took a dislike to him, mutinied and set him adrift in an open boat in one of his chunks. Unfortunately for Hudson, this particular chunk happened to be Hudson Bay, all 1,400,000 square kilometres of it, and he was never seen again. But all this lay in the future as one day, his ship sailed into the estuary of a river which, by a staggering coincidence, became known as the Hudson. He dropped anchor, and went ashore to one of the islands, on which lived a tribe of Delaware Indians, to establish friendly relations. Not, as in all the best cliches, with glass beads and mirrors, but with drink. It must have been quite a lot of drink, because afterwards the Indians called the island "Manahachto-niek", which in Delaware means "the island where we all got drunk". (Eat your heart out, Hazel!) Possibly this explains why they eventually sold Manhattan Island to the Dutch for \$24. They ought to have hung on to it. The annual income from police TV shows filmed in New York must be astronomical by now.

The name most frequently associated with brandy is that of Napoleon, but there was only ever one 'true' Napoleon brandy. This was a cognac presented to the Emperor in 1811, and later imported into England. It was not commercial, and probably not even drinkable. Most brandies using the name Napoleon are just emphasising the age of the product. Now, as all good students of the glossy ads in Punch will be aware, Courvoisier styles itself "the brandy of Napoleon". This is because in 1815, following his abdication after the battle of Waterloo, Napoleon made plans to escape to the United States. His belongings filled two ships, and amongst them was a considerable amount of cognac, presented personally to Napoleon by Emmanuel Courvoisier. In the end, the escape plan had to be abandoned. Napoleon's effects were transferred to the British ships Bellerophon and Mirmidon. The British officers were invited to sample the cognac, which became known as "the Emperor's Brandy", and by extension, Courvoisier became "the brandy of Napoleon". All of which probably upset Old Emmanuel not at all. Just think, that bit of free publicity has been going on for 166 years now!

Here I intend to take a little artistic licence, or at the very least borrow it for the evening. This next one is not connected with anyone or anything, but I happen to like the story. Once upon a time, in the halcyon days before Watneys or jukeboxes full of medley singles, taverns used to brew their own beer. For many centuries there existed a body of officials called "conners", whose job it was to travel around England testing the quality of beer. Their methods varied over the years, but in Elizabethan times it went like this.

1. Put on your pair of official conner's leather breeches.
2. Take one wooden stool.
3. Take a sample of ale, and pour it on the stool.
4. Sit down.
5. Stand up.

Now came the acid test. If the stool stuck to the breeches, the beer was obviously fit for consumption, and was passed. But if the stool fell off,

the publican was obviously a vile blackguard selling inferior produce, and was fined accordingly. This is surely why the Elizabethan age threw up so many heroes - anyone who could drink beer like that would have no trouble in conquering the world for an encore. Can you imagine the Navy of today thrashing the Armada on a bellyful of Whitbread Tankard and prawn cocktail flavour crisps? Drake must be turning in his grave.

Lastly, of course, stands the name of the great and glorious Harvey Wallbanger itself. The Harvey in question is Tom Harvey, a Californian surfer. Around 1970, he was going along regularly to his favourite bar after a hard day on the waves, and ordering screwdrivers with galliano on top. These he would drink until throwing out time, but whether or not he had four friends on hand to share the experience is not recorded. Sadly, when leaving he had a nasty habit of missing the door altogether, and running into the wall instead. Perfect fan material, really. Personally I have never drunk one, but I did observe the computer manager at work after his leaving do in September. He drank nothing but Harvey Wallbangers all lunchtime, and I was amazed that he could actually stand up afterwards (one of his minions in fact couldn't, but that's another story). I didn't see him bang into any walls, but he did develop a nice line in leaning on things and dropping his cigar with great regularity. He must have enjoyed himself, though - he did it all again the next day at a different site. Talk about death wishes.

This, then, is the end, except - do I hear cries of "What about Higgins and the Royal Family?" Well, it seems that around the time of his abdication in 1936, Edward VIII took to drink in a big way. Brandy and soda, to be exact. So big a way, in fact, that on one occasion he became rather ill, and required the services of - A STOMACH PUMP!! This is clear proof that young Steve is descended from royal blood (though on the wrong side of several blankets, if I'm any judge of character). It should have been obvious all along. After all, who but a man of royal breeding could get away with looking like someone for whom the Salvation Army are spreading a dragnet with a view to force-feeding him bowls of soup?

I leave you with this final thought. What of the future? What drinks will posterity have to show from 20th century fandom? Will we ever see the Reading Deaf-aid, the Black Dot, the Albacon Ripoff? It's up to us. I myself intend to start work on a drink to be called the 'Joseph Nicholas'. A glass whose rim has been dipped in lip salve is but mandatory, but does anyone know a chiffon-flavoured liqueur that mixes well with Cinzano?

To a certain extent I have been hoist by my own petard in persuading Brian to write the above article for me. I found it fascinating, but now I'm going around wondering about the derivation other drinks - and I can't find the answers!

How the hell did the screwdriver get its name?
What about the highball?

To make things worse, my interest has been widened to pub names. Have you noticed names such as "The Crooked Billet"? What does that mean, surely not a literal translation. Moreover, I'm fascinated by the story behind pub names. In Lewes there is a pub called the Snowfall, on the site of one of the only deaths by avalanche in southern England (maybe the only death by that means in England, I'm not sure). Fascinating, eh?

Us & Them :

Are Friends Electric ?

EVE HARVEY

This article is making personal history for two reasons: it is the first time that I have included anything about music in Wallbanger; and it is the first time I have ever written anything about music.

I started going to rock concerts quite late in life really - when I was about 20 - and stopped shortly thereafter on meeting John. He'd been going for years and was nearing saturation point by the time I arrived on the scene. I am, therefore, in no way an expert, but tonight, 18th October 1981, we have just been to see Ultravox at the Hammersmith Odeon and their performance has motivated me enough to want to sit down and record my feelings immediately.

The only music of theirs I had heard before tonight was the album 'Vienna' which is, in my view, an excellent example of mechanistic music-making. This is not a style I am familiar with and therefore what follows is not exactly a review, nor is it an in-depth discussion on the music - rather it is an attempt to order my confused subjective responses to the performance. Basically, I came away from Hammersmith not knowing whether I really enjoyed myself, but definitely wanting to see the group again if the opportunity arises. Perhaps the contradiction there will illustrate the turmoil in my mind at the moment. The music was enjoyable, but they are supposed to be a rock group and, based on my (admittedly limited) past experience, I went with preconceived ideas, certain expectations as to the emotional responses generated by a live performance. In this case, however, my reaction was completely different and therefore the following is my attempt to give you two impressions drawn from my feelings as they changed through the evening. This is not to say they were as compartmentalised as they appear here, but were constantly oscillating between the two poles.

The mood for the evening was set by the support - a song and dance duo augmenting the star, a Revox tape recorder fighting madly to produce some semblance of sound against the background hiss of the PA system. Ultravox eventually arrived, only half an hour late which, I suppose, isn't too bad for a group of their prestige and stature. One note is sounded - the audience goes into raptures - an audience which, in fact, appears to be entering a competition for Ultravox look-alikes. The group start and are quite impressive, but there again, drum machines do produce a good sound. They manage to tame the synthesizers quite well, but unfortunately the electric violin does manage to run away with its 'master' on occasion. All in all, we were privy to an exquisite exhibition of automated audio stimuli. Admittedly, it was necessary to actually look at the drummer to discern whether it was him or the beat machine providing the driving force and unfortunately about 80% of the time it was, in fact, the latter.

The whole performance lacked a certain "humanness", however, almost as if the machines were the performers and the people merely custodians pressing the right keys at the right time.

The outfits worn were, for a rock group, rather incongruous - shirt, tie, formal jacket. Where were the t-shirts and jeans? The sweaty armpits? The towels on chairs to mop up the dripping sweat? Apart from one or two numbers near the end, not an erg of excess energy was expended and not a sign of underarm dampness was to be seen.

And now on to the act itself. The music was impressive; it was excellent; it was the standard of the records. In fact, it was the records. Nothing of themselves was added, no ad libbing was allowed. Organized is the word that springs to mind. Professionally organized - stage production fantastic - but extremely organized. The audience were there to watch a performance, they could react to the group but it was not a two-way communication. Apart from three instances, there was no inter-reaction whatsoever between those on stage and the audience. The 3 instances were the single word 'Hello', then a short spurt to say 'that number is on our new album, and so is the next', and finally a slightly longer discourse at the very end to introduce the people you had been listening to for the last 2 hours - and that was it. No breathing space between any of the numbers, the whole thing was choreographed and timed to perfection, even the stage hands knew where to reposition the synthesizers in readiness for the impromptu encore. You had to admire the performance that was given, but feeling, what about feeling?

Right from the first note Ultravox showed themselves as the fantastic musicians that they are. The audience went wild and with good reason; the music was of stupendous quality. The equipment - the synthesizers, the electric violin, the electric guitars and the beat machine - were all used to the highest standards of music-making. The whole performance was so professional, so perfect that, in fact, it didn't need the traditional stage persona so many rock groups don - the ad libs, the talking to the audience and the pretence that, in fact, their stock set of routines is the result of the inter-reaction between the audience and performers. None of this was needed, they could transcend the traditionality of a rock concert and ignore the audience because their music was of such a high quality and that is what people had come for, to listen to the music and be moved by it. And they were. In fact, the finale was the best drum solo I have ever heard or seen.

As you can see from the last two pieces, at times I thought the concert was fantastic, but at other times I was very disappointed and I just don't know whether I would give it an overall 10 out of 10, or 1.

I'm left with an overall feeling of complete uninvolvedness with the group. In rock concerts I have been to in the past, even with no prior knowledge of the group, I have always been affected by the vibrant, vital atmosphere. For example, I saw Southside Johnny at the Rainbow completely cold and though I was lost for the first half, eventually the music got to me, the feeling, the emotion that came from the stage, and I was up there dancing, shouting, applauding until my hands were raw at the end. That didn't happen this time - I could even sit back and analyse my reactions.

I could appreciate the music - it was excellent - but was it any different from the record? Why do you go to see a live band? Quite often the sound quality isn't as good as listening at home, people talking around you and, as on this occasion, you can't distinguish the vocals. Do you go for the visual effect? The stage effects? Yes, they help, it is good to be able to visualise something that was spectacular when listening to the music again. The stage effects and lighting for Ultravox were good, especially when they sang 'Vienna', and that does, and will improve my enjoyment on hearing the record again. But is that enough? Do you have to go and see the group as well? I would say yes. For a start there is the charisma of the group, that doesn't come over on the record. They may play a different arrangement, they may put slightly different feelings into a number or alter the emphases from when it was recorded - something that would be lacking unless you went and saw them live.

Perhaps the uninvolvedness was, as has been said before, due to the fact that the audience were there to see a performance, not to participate in that performance. That may not necessarily be bad, it is different and a new experience for me so I feel I should experience it again to overcome the initial strangeness before I can make an objective judgment. My value judgment at the moment is that I didn't enjoy that distancing because, for me, music is not just auditory, but emotional as well - the emotional content is as important as the technical and I want the emotional involvement of a group in the music they are playing. The professionalism of the performance and the musical and technical abilities of the performers can be appreciated at home, but the emotional commitment can only fully be appreciated live.

Still, if you can manage it, go and see them - see what you think.

POSTMAN'S KNOCK

I hope to be able to continue the practice instigated here of extracting locs from the letter column if they appear to relate to articles elsewhere in the magazine, or to put them separately as an article in their own right, as with Arnold Akien's. Thus, the letters column will constitute the other subjects covered - not to imply that these are any less valid, they merely do not relate so closely to the subject-matter in the issue.

QUESTION : What is the link between Jim Barker, John Harvey and Alexander Solzhenitsyn?

ANSWER : Ask Mike Ashley.

Michael Ashley, 86 St James Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 2DB

It was interesting to note the resemblance between John's article about nearly being arrested and Jim Barker's brush with the law as recounted in One Dead Hedgehog. Both accounts appear to be cathartic, or at least an attempt to assuage feelings of guilt and fear. Odd this, because neither of them had done anything particularly reprehensible. Perhaps they had both technically done wrong, going by the book, but morally they're not

guilty of anything: they'd done nothing malicious, they'd meant no-one any harm. So why these great feelings of dread? I was thinking about giving some spiel concerned with how I, or course, would stay cool in a situation such as they describe, but then I noticed something Jim said that echoes what you wrote; "This only happened to people on Z Cars or The Sweeney. Not to people like me." (Hedgehog). "You know how disasters always happen to someone else? Well, John and I seem to be that someone else." ('But It Pours') - this is probably the reason why fear, guilt and plain paranoia set in: you're completely unprepared. This is a universal trait, of course, and shows just why we let some people get away with (sometimes literally) murder. Now if I was in a suitably pretentious mood I'd refer you to chapter 1 of 'The Gulag Archipelago, Volume One' wherein Alexander Solzhenitsyn in this chapter called 'Arrest' says things not unlike the following:

The Universe has as many different centres as there are living beings in it. Each of us is a centre of the Universe, and that Universe is shattered when they hiss at you: "You are under arrest".

If you are arrested, can anything else remain unshattered by this cataclysm?

But the darkened mind is incapable of embracing these displacements in our universe, and both the most sophisticated and the veriest simpleton among us, drawing on all life's experience, can gasp out only: "Me? What for?"

And this is a question which, though repeated millions and millions of times before, has yet to receive an answer.

Arrest is an instantaneous, shattering thrust, expulsion, somersault from one state into another.

(Lucky I'm not in a pretentious mood eh? and I accept that the two Js had at least done something half-way criminal, unlike Solzhenitsyn, but the point about the fear of arrest which came out in the two articles is backed up by that first chapter... Perhaps John can console himself with the thought that Alexander Solzhenitsyn knows what it feels like.)

**** Talking about being arrested and matters concerned with the police, here is a codicil to the two Js' stories about my recent brush with the police and the bomb squad.

Last week saw the inaugural meeting of yet another 'drinking club' for fans - the Metric Ton or Not the One Ton - held in a pub on the south side of Blackfriars Bridge. Having taken a gentle stroll along the embankment, I arrived straight from work at about 6.30 p.m. Countless Southern Comforts later, and having beaten John (quite brilliantly I might say) at bar billiards, we were eventually thrown out by the bar staff with muttered comments about wanting to get to bed before opening time the following day.

Whilst John was handing over the printed copies of Second Hand Wave to its proud owners, Roy Macinski and I had a deep philosophical discourse on the moonlight reflecting on the Thames. Very poetic. Then John and I drew straws to decide whose licence was going to be lost (well, I thought he had promised to stay sober to drive us back!)

On our return home I asked the innocent question, "Where's my briefcase?"

Not in the car. Jesus - I must have left it behind. John was a little upset at this, but on hearing where I'd left it his foot suddenly collided with the side of the car - standing on the pavement, next to where the car had been parked on the bridge!

Roy sat in the kitchen whilst John and I had a serious and constructive discussion on whose mentality resembled that of something that crawls out from underneath upturned stones; then I phoned the pub.

"Was it a black briefcase?" "Yes". "I think you'd better phone City Police, we've just had a bomb scare."

Yet more quiet discussion which came to the conclusion that it was an insult to compare someone's mentality to that slimy creepy-crawly under the stone (insult to said creepy-crawly). The policeman was quite pleasant and said he hadn't actually called in the bomb squad, which was lucky for me since there moto is "If it doesn't move, blow it up." (Although if this had occurred the following week, after the Oxford Street scare, I don't think my briefcase would have stood a chance!).

So a rather embarrassed Eve had to collect her belongings next day. Still, at least my story has a happy ending - sorry to let the side down John, I'll try harder next time.

Now onto happier matters - Bob Shaw's article in W4.....

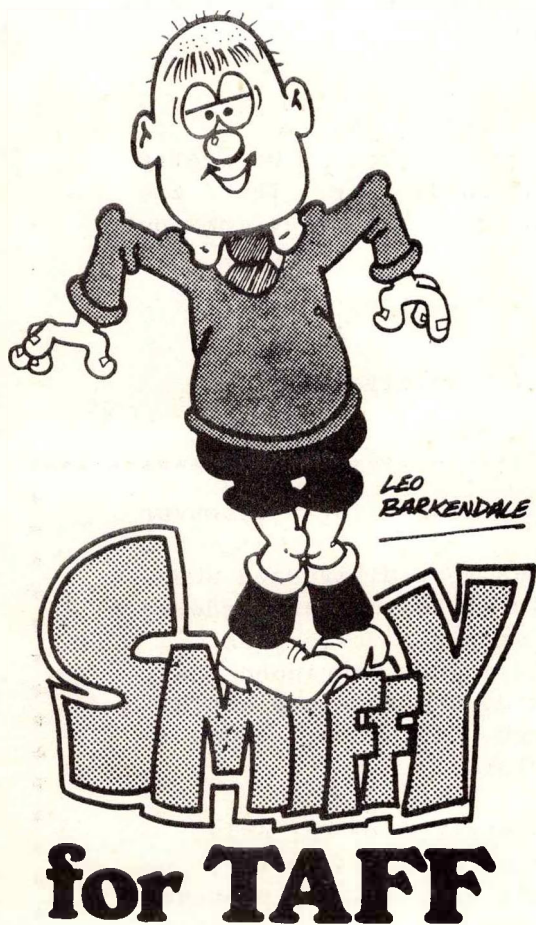
John Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnall, Bucks

The Saucy Apprentice is marvellous, and Shaw manages to conjure up a smashing picture of almost tangible discrepitude in Eddie Barratt, the depths to which any long-term employee can sink to, if he's not careful. There is probably an Eddie Barratt in almost anybody's past who has worked in industry for a while - there has certainly been a couple in mine. The most outstanding was a guy called Tookey, who was a manager at Punch Publications while I was there. He was the most evil little man it has ever been my displeasure to work for. If there is such a thing as a Napoleon Complex, this guy had it for sure. He was all of 5ft nothing with a very high-domed head and a little Hitlerian moustache. He used to wear rubber-soled shoes and would creep about the corridors quietly and pounce into people's offices with a staccato 'What are you doing, why aren't you working?' fanaticism that earned him the reputation of Adolf's brother (if he had been older, we'd probably have shopped him to the Israeli's as herr Adolf himself). We all had to keep our doors firmly shut, as he could materialize in an open door and be there, watching with a beady malevolent eye for a few minutes before you looked up from your mag or book to see him glowering at you. (Well, it was a boring job!) If I saw him nowadays I'd probably feel quite sorry for the bastard.

Andy Sawyer, 59 Mallory Road, Birkenhead, Merseyside

Bob Shaw's article shows how easy it is to end up as top SF writer - or maybe it just looks like it; he tells a good yarn so effortlessly it's only when you start remembering similar things in your own past that you realise the difficulty in actually relating them. I mean, there's a very funny story about how I was picked to play goalie for my school football team - my big chane! - stardom beckoning! - and missed the bus, walked three miles, joined the match twenty minutes late and let in three goals. Actually working it into something readable, however, is even harder than reliving the embarrassment of finding out that there was a bus ten minutes after the one I missed. Perhaps I've led a singularly boring life, of course. I nearly became a top Sunday Times journalist, but was foiled by a typhoon.....

WALLBANGER SUPPORTS



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