



CACTUS TIMES

Friday 3 May

Knockin' On Heaven's Door

TALES FROM THE MUNCHEN

Wednesday's meet-Waldrop SF Supper Club do went well. Dave Langford seemed a bit anxious; when questioned he revealed: 'Well, for years I'd been hearing about Howard's bizarre clothes-sense, and then first of all he looked perfectly normal to me, and then he said "I like your jacket"'. His nerves may have been improved by a breathless Helen Starkey cooing 'I want your attitudes, Dave,' a little later. Tediously, he insists she was talking about information technology. The Munchen's extra-strong draught lager seems to have clouded some memories: 'I think I remember slandering Dave Pringle,' says one lady guest 'but I don't think I want that reported.' A motherly barmaid tried to encourage boyish waif Richard Berry to take some French bread home for breakfast: 'It'll go stale.'

'No, you just wrap it in a damp cloth and put it in the oven, it's fine.' Richard thought hard. 'I haven't got an oven.' She was not deterred. 'Well, you can put it in any hot place.' 'I don't think I've got a hot place...'

PUNCHY PARTY

Friday night's party celebrates Mexican. Your suave hostesses are Linda (Desperate Fun) Kraweke and Chris Atkinson; goodies include the infamous Mexican Death Punch and finger food not exactly sponsored by the Cafe Munchen. Starts 11.30pm in the Ballroom.

ON THE SOFA

John Jarrold's guests for tonight's Not The Terry Wogan Show are Iain Banks, Geoff Ryman and Howard Waldrop. Incidentally, Banks provided a highlight on a (fairly) recent BBC2 Late Show; asked if Brett Easton Ellis's over-hyped American Psycho was a 'how-to-do-it' book for sadistic killers, Banks responded: 'No, that's ridiculous! Driving nails through people's fingers? You can't do it! Through their palms, perhaps...' You can tell he's a good skiffy lad at heart.

Glutton's Corner

Hot and cold snack meals are available as listed in your programme sheet; in addition, sandwiches can be ordered at the bar throughout opening hours. Breakfast vouchers (also exchangeable for lunchtime snacks) are in your 'welcome letter' envelope, which you should find in your room. If you haven't had one already, go and look for it now.

Cactus Times wants your restaurant recommendations (or even condemnations): Nic Farey enjoyed the Blues Cafe, 4 Montpelier

Parade (two courses and drinks about £10; music of the obvious kind) and a party last night found Gianni's, Cheltenham Parade (trendified Italian; pasta about £4) tasty, helpful to people on funny diets, and friendly to kids, service slowish, though. Cheltenham Parade looks the best bet for eating; pretty well one of everything. The Cafe Bar there won't serve children after 6.00pm; Naomi calls this a shame, because it had baked potatoes and looks good for family lunches.

ETERNAL LIGHT FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES

Our sidebar programme kicks off tonight with a reading by Paul McAuley (Eternal Light, 10.00-10.15pm); also in the Library (12 midnight), Colin Greenland interviews Michael Moorcock (don't get too excited, it's on video). Saturday's sidebar programme and Library items: Super science videos (Horizon's Colonising Cyberspace, 10.30am, the Voyager mission, 11.30am); TAFF presentation 1.00pm; 2.30-2.45pm, I wish I'd written that, David Langford; 4.00-4.15pm, Conditions of work, Anne Gay; 5.30-5.45pm, Paul Williams reading; late night video, to be announced.

THE BLUE TABLE IS REALLY A GREEN ROOM

Is that clear? The square, blue-covered table in the lounge is the contact point for programme participants. Do not use it for any other purpose, however imaginative.

SMOKE ALARM

What does a Cactus Times editor do once she's checked into a hotel? Goes to her room, gets a bath running, makes a cup of tea and lights up a -- ARRRGH! How could you do this to me, Ford?

If, like me, you specified a smoking room and discovered a no-smoking sign on the door, don't worry. The sign (just below the fire-drill stuff) is intended to make you be a bit careful about the fire hazard, but carries no force unless the room's occupier wants it to. Nearly all the rooms have the sign, but there are very few designated no-smoking rooms (if you have one, you'll know about it and will have asked for it). Obviously, if you're in someone else's room (for whatever innocent purpose) you should refrain from smoking unless they give permission.

Certain areas of the lounge, and the entrance side of the Ballroom, have no-smoking signs put there by Mexican. These will be strictly enforced, even by Frost, Hodson and Farey.

OPENING TIMES

Book Room: closes 6.00pm tonight, open 10.00am-6.00pm throughout the con.

Committee Room/Cactus Times: Personned 10.00am-12.00 noon, 3.30-5.30pm; at other times, find a committee member for general con queries, Maureen Speller if it's about a programme item that you're appearing in; items for Cactus Times (must be in writing) can be placed in the box at the registration desk. We do not accept unsigned articles or news items, though we can make arrangements to preserve anonymity for a fee if you ask.

Bar: Saturday and Sunday, 10.00am-3.00am, to 11.00pm Monday.

Wanted: Two people currently occupying twins-as-singles who are willing to double up Saturday night. See Hodson or Ford who will explain various advantages.

Corona Countdown: It's good to find a hotel which takes the important things seriously. Our request for Mexican beer has been met with 200 cases; take your choice from Corona, Dos Eques and Sol. By noon today a case and a half had been drunk. **THIS IS NOT NEARLY GOOD ENOUGH --** get moving and show that our demand can lick their supply. The honour of Mexican is at stake.

There's a special Mexican beer bar (cash only) at the entrance to the Windsor Restaurant to help you in your endeavours.

THE DEMON DON'TS

DON'T: Smoke in no-smoking areas (see Smoke Alarm); smoke or take food or drinks into the ATom Art Show (at all), or the Book Room (unless you're a dealer at a table).

DON'T, for your own good, enter the vast marquee which surrounds the Cairn (and has eaten much of the car-park, for which the hotel apologises). It's patrolled by extremely vicious dogs (we're not kidding -- one has already bitten its trainer). Gypsy (even canophobic Frost isn't scared of her) apologises for her species-mates.

The marquee, since you ask, is for a Needlecraft Fair next weekend. It's a great embarrassment to our super-helpful hotel contact Sue Zantides -- nobody told her how enormous it would be. Alternative parking space is available next door in the grounds of the annex.

DON'T: Hassle the hotel staff (they've been wonderful, never refusing any of our peculiar requests) about anything. Hassle Dave Hodson instead and get nussed for your trouble.

MISTRESS HILL'S DIARY

Thursday 2 May 1729: All good Society is bound for Mexican, and so is Mr F. of Hitchin, who offers to drive me. Agree on condition he takes me to Harrogate-spa once finished. Dashing hell-for-leather through wildest South-Yorkshire we spot a sinister figure on a spirited black steed -- a High-Wayman! Mr F. whips horses up into a frenzy but I tell him not to be a fool, more important to get up Speed and escape the Terror of the Turnpike. 'Fly, fly, lest you be made to Stand and Deliver!' I cry, wondering what Supernatural Force could have such effect when I could not. Yet when he overtakes us, his cry is not 'Stand and deliver!' but 'The lawful speed is but 70 miles per hour!', for he is but a clomping rustick constable. Mr F. displeased. Proceed at stately pace to Harrogate.



CACTUS TIMES

Vol 3 Issue 2: Saturday 4 May

Anarchy in the UK

UNAUTHORISED SEX A GREAT SUCCESS

The highlight of Friday night was undoubtedly The Unauthorised Sex Company, and Cactus Times has sent a roving reporter to interview Geoff Ryman and Simon Ings. It was generally agreed that Simon, who at times wore nothing but a thong, has the best parts, and got a big hand on his entrance. Geoff wants everyone to know that this was a collaborative production, and they were never sure who would come up with what. As well as Geoff, Simon and Colin on stage, there were significant contributions from Dave McKean, Nic Farey, Sylvia Starshine and M. John Harrison, who sadly was forced to withdraw at the last moment. Nevertheless, Simon reckons it's very easy to see Mike's parts because he wears Lycra while rock-climbing. The company intends to do several more productions, and hopes to appear at this year's Edinburgh Festival, when the show will be longer and will have extended parts for all the members, though they are considering cutting certain parts. Aspiring company members should be aware that Geoff's casting couch is always laid out for all and sundry. Please apply to Room *[deleted on grounds of good taste]* for full audition and Unauthorised Sex.

EAT YOUR HEART OUT

Changes in the announced arrangements for food: Sandwiches should be ordered from Hotel reception, *not* the bar.

The day's first snack meal (the one that takes breakfast vouchers) will be served from 12.30pm, not 12.00. This is to enable staff to clear up after the usual throng of last-minute breakfasters.

Need a free meal? There's a restaurant in town called The Cattlemens' Association (Cheltenham Parade) offering a 72oz steak free if you can eat it in under an hour. Take-up so far claimed to be 350+; over 150 have succeeded. The record is just over 19 minutes.

SALES FIGURES

This morning's auction raised £136.36 for Friends of Foundation and £23.89 for TAFF and the ATom fund. An overflow auction is likely to take place in the Library; details when available.

Amstrad Appeal

Do you happen to have an Amstrad PCW in your luggage? Or do you own one and live near Tottenham, North London, or at a pinch (very near) Heathrow Airport? Fans Across the World needs a disk duplicating for Bridget Wilkinson to take to the Eurocon in Poland. She departs 8am Wednesday.

TOMATO PRESS

Even the Attack of the Killer Tomatoes are trying to get in on the act. This morning on kids TV killer tomatoes in sombreros bounced up to the Evil Scientist. They demanded his badge, and he replied (all together now) 'I don't need no Steenking badge' before stalking off. The Mexican Killer Tomatoes then squelched off into the sunset.

Mexican Beer Update

Sol and Corona are moving across the bar like hot cakes. The hotel tells us that we have currently drunk our way through 250 bottles, with the help of lots of luscious limes. Due to a slight technical hitch, however, the wedges are currently too large to fit in the bottles. A lime surgeon is sought. Our resident beer expert describes Sol as 'a prime example of the Mexican style, this beer reveals a snappy bouquet with overtones of hazelnuts and white truffles, a clean fresh taste reminiscent of Acapulco on a Wednesday lunchtime and the sort of crisp finish more usually associated with the white wines of Norway.' He is currently receiving medical attention.

MASS SIGNING

A big signing session will take place on Sunday at 3.45pm, outside the Ballroom; authors signing on a round-robin basis.

CONGRATULATIONS

To George and Maureen Speller, who were married on Easter Monday at All Saints', Margaret Street. The happy couple are well-known in the SF community, George being the new editor of a slightly chequered small press magazine, while Maureen, of course, is a Mexican committee member, ex-BSFA co-ordinator and practically everything else. About 250 people attended the reception at the Limelight Club, none of them from fandom. Maureen explains apologetically: 'I was in such a rush that there just wasn't time to make a list. Anyway, it's all a little, well embarrassing, you know ...'

Mexicon would like to thank Maureen and George for their generous donation of leftover food for Friday's party.

Born-Again Eighties Fan

Yesterday night was enlivened by the reappearance of Pete Crump, previously thought to be missing without trace in Gafia. Last known sighting was Follycon three years ago. Pete is celebrating the birth of his son, Philip Richard Crump, two weeks ago. Apparently his wife has not yet realised that the lad is named after an SF author.

Desperately Seeking Salsa

Arch-reporter Steve Glover has discovered that Harrogate is crawling with Mexican restaurants. Sadly, he can't actually remember where any of them are. A quick perusal of the Yellow Pages reveals the Salsa Posada in Mayfield Grove and the Mexicano in Scarborough.

John's on Twice

John Joyce, who'll be performing Philip K Dick's *Metz Speech* on Sunday night, can also be seen in *The Wolvis Family* on BBC2 at 9.35 pm. Billed as 'a fly on the wall documentary about family therapy,' but actually a sitcom.

Confessions of an Unreliable Reporter

1. Friends of Foundation have a copy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Sadly, it's the Meiklejohn translation.

2. Dave Langford revealed that the book he'd most like to have written was Whitley Streiber's *Majestic*. At least he got to write *part* of it.

3. Paul Williams' *100 Best Singles* has been artistically discredited by its complete failure to include *any* Eurovision Song Contest Winners.

4. Ian Sorenson's new theory of writing has been described as 'Fractal Geometry applied to novels.' Not by him.

Nosh Spot

An OK time can be had at the Casa Romana (Italian, fools), 23 Cheltenham Crescent. Attractions last night included Brian and Jane Stableford plus Dave Langford, and a floor show of various fans -- all called Weston -- who pressed their noses against windows, blanched in horror at the prospective company, and decided to go elsewhere. Food was served. Also wine. Seemed rather good, though not of the cheapest. 'This is on me,' said a certain idiot beforehand, and added 'Jesus Christ, £68.58 for three?' afterwards. Probably worth it.... (Down the hill, turn left, turn right ... just like most other restaurants.)

Thanks

This issue of Cactus Times owes a great deal to the efforts of Alison and Mike Scott, Mike Abbott, Vince Clarke and John Harvey. AJF



CACTUS TIMES

Vol 3 Issue 3: Saturday 4 May

Going to A-Go-Go

EXCLUSIVE TO CACTUS TIMES SHORT STORY BY NEIL GAIMAN!

See page 2

LIBRARY'S FINE

Sunday's sidebar items and other events in the Library: 1.00pm Meeting to discuss London BSFA meetings -- what would you like to see at them? 2.30pm Conditions of Work, Storm Constantine; 4.00pm Conditions of work, Jenny Jones; 5.30pm Colin Greenland reading; 7.00. I Wish I'd Written That, Brian Stableford. These four sidebar items are sponsored by Headline. 10.00, K V Bailey and SF poetry. Bailey explains: 'SF verse shares with the whole craft of poetry a range of styles - traditional, innovative, experimental. It is, however, distinctive in that its content draws on insights and concepts common to the genre and its sub-genres. Reading from a number of British and a few American writers of sf verse will illustrate and give opportunity for discussion of, e.g., the prose/verse borderline relationship of sf verse to 'mainstream', etc.'

Of the two Library items I saw, Dave Langford's sidebar talk was 'incredibly brilliant' (Eva D Fanglord) and well-attended; the TAFF panel was traditionally small and select, and turned into an allround fannish brainstorm at points.

LATE NIGHT READING AND VIDEO

Ramsey Campbell will read a new story and a 'funny bit about the Highgate Vampire' in the Library at 11.30 tonight; followed (approx 12.15am) by William Burroughs' Final Academy Document.

Hyperlexical Catastrophism

A disaster was only narrowly averted in the book room this morning. John Clute picked up and toyed dangerously with a copy of the *Dictionary of Archaic Words* from the Friends of Foundation stall. Breath was held. What happens when a reviewing vocabulary achieves supercriticality? Fortunately John decided not to buy the book, no doubt because all the words seemed completely familiar....

Four Hundred Billion Sales?

Tonight sees the launch of Paul McAuley's *Eternal Light*, Gollancz's book of the year for 1991. The industry buzz suggests that BSFA and Clarke awards could well be forthcoming for this piece of radical hard SF from the author of *Four Hundred Billion Stars*. And you heard it here first, as Paul read from the book on Friday night.

Pickles Repeats

Vince Clarke reports that old-time Bradford fan Derek Pickles, who disappeared from the scene in 1955 and has reappeared at Mexican, shows every sign of going native again.

DAMN BOOKROOM

...Say its inhabitants; about 350 members but no-one's buying books. Rog reckons it's the recession; maybe we're all poor.

British Beer Fights Back

We've almost drunk the hotel dry of Webster's; supplies expected Real Soon Now.

Liftcon continues

Mexicon's child members have been offering free lifts to any floor in the elevators, says Linda Strickler. They don't bite (and neither does Gypsy)!

Spooning

Deborah Hickenlooper Rohan (wife of author Mike Scott Rohan) has a new twist on the getting-bored-going-into-a-corner-and-knitting syndrome. She's taken up silversmithing and is filling odd moments at Mexican by working on her silver spoons. Yes, one *is* destined for the mouth of a colleague's forthcoming baby.

Wanted

Gill and John Alderman ask: 'Anyone going by car to the Birmingham area, Sunday pm? If so, could we have a lift?' Room 246 or leave a message with reception.

Party person

'One glass of Mexican Death Punch laid me low last night.' (Eight Coronas had nothing to do with it.)

Pole frozen out

Mabinogicon's Fan Guest of Honour, Agnieszka Sylwanowicz -- one of the Poles who worked in the Green Room at Confiction -- has been refused a visa by the British Embassy in Warsaw. Apparently an official invitation was not enough.

Bridget Wilkinson is going to Warsaw during May after Cracon and will threaten the Embassy with bad publicity from Critical Wave, wads of money, and a mountain of letters from British fans -- your help may be needed.

Praise all round

This is Cactus Times, the convention newsletter of which it has been said, 'Bloody Hell, they're writing this today'. Resisting the temptation to claim second sight, much credit goes to Vince Clarke, Alison Scott, and Avedon Carol and Dave Langford, for production, reporting, typing/editorial and crash-landing respectively. Statistics on this computer's bloody crashes are available. AJF

Pitman's Model (after H.P.Lovecraft)

"But b Gd, Elliott, t ws a phtgraph from lfe!"

Neil Gaiman

(Original in the multi-signed Mexican programme book to be auctioned for TAFF.)



CACTUS TIMES

Vol 3 Issue 4: Sunday 5 May

Complete Control

YOU SHOULD SEE SOME OF THE OTHERS

PK Dick fans please note: John Joyce, who played Philip K Dick in John Dowie's 1989 play, has adapted Dick's notorious Metz speech *If you find this world bad, you should see some of the others* as a one-person theatre piece. After warm-ups in The Hague and snowy London, Joyce (also known for his work with the Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool), unveils his newly revised and absolutely definitive PKD performance tonight at 11.30. I've come 8000 miles to see this and encourage you to check it out.

Paul Williams, Cactus Times PKD Beat Bureau Chief

The Myles Desk adds: The many-talented Mr Joyce is also a Flann O'Brien fan, who won rave reviews in *The Spectator* some years ago for his portrayal of your man's Plain Man. If he likes, after his own performance finishes, he can watch an amateur video of *The Third Policeman* in the Library (approx 12.30am depending on JJ's timing). So can you. No bicycles allowed.

3 hrs

Programme Change

Fanzine panel, 3.00pm: Lilian Edwards is unwell. She will be replaced by a mystery guest.

Another kind of crash

Hotel staff discovered this morning that the 'crash'-locking fire doors in the Duchy Room (the kid's room) had been crashed open. They were concerned about this because there is a huge drop from the fire-escape outside and a nasty accident could easily have happened, although as Mexican kids are sensible kids, it didn't. These doors are very heavy and it seems unlikely that one of the room's regular inhabitants could have been responsible.

If the culprit is posing as an adult, and you know who they are, crash them on the committee's behalf.

The Programme So Far

From what I've seen of it in person and in the programme book, this has been a good solid programme -- not revolutionary, but interesting and thought-provoking. Some faces seem to turn up on rather a lot of the panels, but that's because they're the ones who are interesting when they get up there, or even when they're joining in from the audience. One mark lost for putting the Unauthorised Sex Company on so early on Friday night, but a bonus mark in compensation for bringing along Iain Sinclair -- not a usual panel face at

all, and absorbing listening. I also approve of the return of fanzines as a subject of discussion.

As I said, it isn't revolutionary, but there's a limit to how many revolutions you can have in a given time span. What this programme shows (both what I've been to and what I'm looking forward to today and tomorrow) is that it's still possible to come up with interesting ideas and new topics within the context of the now-traditional serious SF programme seen at Mexican and elsewhere.

Michael Abbott

[Kid] Sisters are doin' it for themselves

Nobody fell out of the Duchy Room fire-door as far as Naomi knows. While walking Gypsy early this morning, she and Amanda Dorey found a (vacated) robin's egg -- larger than one would expect from such a small bird but what does CT know about it?

Mexicon's youngest member is CT's next-door neighbour Alice Robertson, four months and a disputed number of days. You may have seen Andy doing the New Man thing with a front-loading baby-sling.

Free Fanzines

Vince Clarke has donated a large selection of fanzines for your delectation and delight. Call in at the ATom art show, browse through them and take home any that interest you.

MEXICON'S MORAL TONE LOWERED SHOCK HORROR

We regret to announce that famed juvenile lesbian pornographer Ian Williams (see recent *Critical Waves*) has been sighted at registration. Some of us remember when Williams's novels were a running joke; now they're a federal case. Regrettably, since he was a Tynecon 2: The Mexican committee member, there was no way we could exclude him. Lock up your daughters.

(Well, some deviants with no concern for the nation's moral welfare think it's nice to see a Gannet presence here. Ian is accompanied by Tynecon 2's longest-lasting walk-in, Ian Bambro, who sends Harry Bell's best wishes all round.)

Make Bernie Evans a happy woman

Twentycon had taken only one registration by breakfast time today. What's wrong with you all? Is Harry Harrison *that* unpopular?

Rectify this appalling situation at the *Critical Wave* table in the Promenade Lounge -- £15 attending, £6 supporting.

Competition Corner

Another intellectual challenge to Mexican members! Last night the Kinara Tandoori in Cheltenham Crescent was crammed with the traditional fans voting with their stomachs -- but this is not a restaurant review. (It was OK, though.) Now answer this: Who, seeing a couple of exhausted *Cactus Times* hacks stagger in after finishing the crash-prone issue 3, leaned confidentially over their table and said at great length, as the soft lighting glistened on his shining pate: 'Ah, an *intimate dinner for two*, I see the *young love* in their eyes, the *romantic candlelight*, the sensual ambience (etc, etc), and I warn you I shall have to write to Hazel about this....'? Was it: (a) Christina Lake; (b) Jenny Jones; (c) Lilian Edwards; (d) Arnold Akien? Rare signed prize for the first correct answer plucked from our sackload of response.

WANTED URGENTLY

Very large sack.

Critical Wave

Business started well with two lifetime subs (bringing their total of lifetime subscribers to

19), but since then has been very slow, with only nine renewals or new subscriptions and a few sales.

Con Desks Shock Probe!

Rhodri James, our man with memberships in absolutely everything (also, our man with the overdraft) has been gathering red-hot statistics from the front line. Dateline 1pm Sunday. Keep these figures refrigerated after opening the wrapper....

Mabinogicon (Ivan Towlson) reports 5 memberships sold and is 'fairly happy with things'.

Illumination (Rhodri himself) has sold 8 memberships and is feeling distinctly neglected. 'Everyone seems to be strapped for cash.' (Your typist confesses to handing over a post-dated cheque and a lot of rash promises of funds to come.)

Helicon (Tim Illingworth) has however sold 20 memberships and lots of T-shirts, and is feeling 'happy'. (PhD project: are fans 'strapped for cash' only after passing the Helicon desk?)

Protoplasm (Neil Curry) has flogged 3 memberships, 'about what was expected'.

Soupson (Roger Perkins) sold 2 memberships and likewise regarded this as the expected level.

Keep watching the skies!

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CACTUS TIMES

Vol 3 Issue 5: Sunday 5 May

I Heard It Through The Grapevine

LINDA STRICKLER'S FILOFAX TO THE RESCUE!

Two kegs of Tetley's Bitter are on their way by taxi as we write (6.00pm).

PROGRAMME CHANGES

(Yes, doesn't it -- Sub-editor)

Regrettably, Barry Bayley and Maxim Jakubowski can't make it to tonight's 'Again, New Worlds' at 6.00pm, but Chris Evans's expertise will help us out.

Library, 10.00pm: K V Bailey's SF Poetry reading/discussion. Volunteer readers (he's got the poems) encouraged. Catch Maureen Speller.

Library, 12.30am (approx) *The Third Policeman* video. Attendance compulsory for Flann O'Brien fandom.

Peter Weston has agreed to stand in for Dave Wood at the Gone But not Forgotten panel at 10.30am tomorrow morning.

No sidebar programming Monday; good opportunity to grab the room for a meeting or to watch *The Simpsons*.

Liquidometer

As of 3.30 pm today 43 crates of Corona and 18 crates of Sol had been sold. As we started with 100 crates in all there are less than 40 to go, so speed up folks! (Note that the bar has lowered the price per bottle to £1.50. Note also that the typist has bet the bar manager a fiver that we will finish the supplies!)

The Final Munchie

The last snack of the convention will be available at 5.00pm on Monday afternoon, after the closing ceremony. Hungry stomachs are advised to queue in time.

Bookroom saviours

Dealer pleas for mindless buying were answered by Fiona A., who after mere seconds in the fleamarket emerged with a massive box of fanzines. Pressed for a comment, Mike C. said: "I'm not carrying this home!"

BSFA focuses vector matrix

Attracted by the literary lure of Mexicon no fewer than four BSFA editors appeared to observe and participate in the action. There is Kev McVeigh new co-ordinator and Vector co-editor; Cecil Nurse who edits Focus for the aspiring SF writer and Steve and Jenny Glover, co-editors of Matrix, the newsletter. Any of the above will be delighted to answer queries on the BSFA: if you catch them first.

Soft Toy corner

Many Mexicon members have been asking the purpose of a certain soft-furred toy, attached to the hip of one member. Olibear (the teddy in question) would like to point out that he is here entirely on his own account, purely for the purpose of leisure, fun and midnight-cuddles and is even a registered member of the convention. The fact that he employs alien transport facilities merely reflects his mental superiority to the humans who get cramps from standing at the bar all around him. [*We don't need no steenkin' teddybears!* -- Ed.]

Germany Redivided

'There is a thin membrane between helping and taking over.'

This was the comment of a reviewer of fandom in the reunited Germany. He was commenting on the way the Wessies (West-Germans) were talking to the Ossies (East-Germans). The Ossies have ruder ways of saying it, and they are probably right.

Still, it's not as bad as the verdict why we all go to conventions: 'blinding bigheadedness', which must be one of the silliest I have ever heard. (From *Fandom Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* by I forget whom... the Guest of Honour speech in Cologne some years ago.) [*Yes, but then that's Cologne for you* -- Ed] Graham England-Koch

Check-outs and Cheques

The hotel would like to remind all departing guests that the deadline for check-out is 12 noon tomorrow, and all rooms must be vacated by then to allow the hotel to service them for the tours coming in tomorrow evening.

The bar will operate on a cash basis only tomorrow (as the hotel has to have time to add up all your chits!); therefore, Reception will cash cheques for up to £20 when you check out, so you can give it all back to them at the bar!

A secure room will be available from 10.00am (guarded by Gypsy!) -- see Linda Strickler to check luggage in or out. **STOP PRESS:** This will be the Art Show room; last chance to see it!

Polyglotcon

Eigentlich sollte man von einem SF-convention mit literarisch so herausragendem Programm wie Mexicon erwarten, wenigstens teilweise in der Sprache des adoptierten Herkunftslandes zu operieren. Da jedoch die Mexikanitaet des Cons im wesentlichen auf den Barbereich beschaenkt zu bleiben scheint, wurde der Autor ueberredet, fuer zumindest einen fremdsprachlichen Beitrag zu sorgen. Hier ist er. Die gewaehlte Sprache faellt mit der Nationalitaet des Tippers zusammen. (And, no, this machine doesn't do umlauts either.) (Yes it fucking does. Just ask and it will be revealed -- Sub-editor. [And the umlaut -- Editor-in-chief])

Letters to the Editor

'Interesting though I found vol 3 issue 4 of Cactus Times, I was quite upset to see, or rather *not* see, Novacon 21 mentioned!

'The desk can be found next to Critical Wave, or in its usual position in the bar.'

Disgusted of Birmingham

[We would be happy to aid the upkeep of statistics by printing the number of memberships which Novacon has managed to palm off on people at Mexicon, if any representative can be coerced into admitting them.]

Incomprehensible Small Ads. Department

Are you Firm and Fruity? See you later, Ululators! About 11.00pm; ask Chris or Linda.

Mexican Style Vegetarian Chilli

Ingredients

usual veggie chilli constituents

½ bottle Tequila

salt

lemon

Method

First ritually slaughter the lemon. Try to have one slice of lemon left when you emerge from

your citricidal frenzy. Place salt on back of hand (or foot of consenting adult); then lick, drink and sink your teeth into the succulent flesh of the freshly slaughtered lemon. Repeat until Tequila bottle is empty. Now make vegetarian chilli in the normal way.

Pontette and >8WR

Whither the BSFA?

Numerous seekers after enlightenment claim to have looked in on the discussion panel on the BSFA's London meetings (sidebar, Sunday, 1.00pm)... and to have found no event. This is a misapprehension. The event was provided by Dave Langford, who -- inspired by a US fanzine piece on 'microprogramming' -- wandered in and delivered a stirring address for almost 30 seconds. 'As I gaze on the rows and rows of earnest faces in the audience, my faith is renewed and I know that the BSFA will endure for a thousand years [etc, etc]'. Audience: zero. Does the Guinness Book of Records have a section on convention minimalism?

Hope Springs Eternal

Abi: Oh Master, I got you into the fanzine panel although it was not your gracious pleasure to be there.

D West: ?????

Abi: I described you as one of the great achievements of the Leeds Group along with *Interzone* and this convention.

D: You mean to say I'm being *subsidised* by the Leeds Group?

Thanks again to...

Oliver Grüter (acting editor for ½ the issue), John Harvey (last night's production), Naomi, Mike Abbott (roving reportage), Harry Bond (sub), Vinç (see what we can do) Clarke, Daev Lngford (proffredder), Martin Tudor (Best Boy), Mike Ford (Key Grip). AJF



CACTUS TIMES

Vol 3 Issue 6: Monday 5 May

Baby Please Don't Go

YOU MAY HAVE READ IT HERE LAST BUT IT'S STILL BLOODY TERRIFYING

US President George Bush is in hospital for a heart operation. At 9.00am today (UK time) Vice-President Dan Quayle was reported to be 'getting ready to take over as Acting President'. Further words fail us.

OH NO NOT AGAIN

For the third time to CT knowledge we have drunk the Cairn dry of bitter. (Disgruntled Corona Countdown staff are considering declaring Webster's an honorary Mexican.) Worse, the Guinness is gone as well. Unfortunately, we've also dried up the Bank Holiday resources of Linda's Tetley executive contact, so it's probable that no more will be available. (We told Sue, honest.)

FANZINE OF THE YEAR

It's *Brian Moore's Head Is Uncannily Like The London Planetarium*, or so say the members of the first ever football fanzine convention, taking place this weekend at the Birmingham Writers and Readers Festival. Shall we see certain persons getting into a feud with the likes of the Inter-City Firm?

A nation ceases to mourn

TWIN PEAKS is back tomorrow night, usual time, usual station. (And if Keith Knight got this wrong, I'm going to be Bob.)

We Are The Champions

The news the *Sunday Mirror* dared not print: results of the E*r*v*s**n S*ng C*nt*st. Sweden won it, closely followed by various other countries (but not Britain, who were nowhere, though not as nowhere as Austria, *nul point*.) Man of steel Graham England-Koch watched it on telly; 'The set was like something out of "Cleopatra"... the Italian presenters were the most useless it's possible to imagine... the Ankara jury went incommunicado and it took six attempts to raise them... basically it was a complete shambles.' Nice to see tradition being upheld.

This has been a public service announcement for those suffering from Convention News Deprivation. (Such as Secret Master of Trash Colin Harris and his ever-so-serious Octarine friends.)

Homoeopathy Corner

Brian Stableford's sidebar talk on Sunday recounted a desperate struggle to make millions from 'alternative' science. The concept of vast homoeopathic dilutions, which supposedly *increase* the potency of drugs to incredible levels, was mercilessly extended: 'It's also true that the people with the loudest and most potent opinions in pubs are the ones with the most infinitesimal, diluted traces of actual information or education'. We all rushed out to do field research in the bar and found Gamma. (Next lesson: Homoeopathic Fansmanship, or how to retain vast fame and influence by doing absolutely bugger all.)

Brunette on blond

Cub reporter Naomi James has been finding out the downside of fan journalism the hard way. You just can't have all the egoboo yourself. She makes amends: 'Dylan James was named after Bob Dylan, whose real name is Robert Zimmerman. He was named as Bob Dylan because his dad Graham James liked him and Dylan's due date was May 25 which is Bob Dylan's birthday, but he came 10 days late so his birthday is on June 5th. Dylan James was sad because I was in the Cactus Times 3 times and he wasn't in any so this is your roving reporter for children, Naomi James'

SWIMMING IN SPA WATER

'You haven't been to Betty's?' Eileen Weston marvelled. 'Why, their cakes are out of this world.' She stepped into the lift and, still smiling beatifically, was borne aloft. Obviously the deity made no objection to her heresy. ♦ At the Cattleman's Association Mike Abbott was in a different kind of heaven: he tackled the Pig's Dinner ('for 2 or more'), all on his own. He made it...and ordered another one. That shows true dedication. ♦ Graham Joyce was having trouble with his...dedications that is. Well, how would you dedicate your first book to Kim Newman? Answers on a postcard please, c/o Pan. ♦ No problem with Rob Meades' dedication to Alison Scott's feet. We all know about foot massage, but this was something else. David Barrett was also deeply dedicated to Alison's comfort...at least, he spent an hour serving her...coffee...in her room. It has been noted that David has changed his style in recent years. When asked what he was like before, Caroline Mullan answered, 'Stiff!' ♦ Talking of shy, retiring female fans, what can Roz Kaveney have said to topple Chris Bell flat on her back in the car park, howling with laughter? Presumably she was quite recovered by the time the pair were seen, deep in confabulation, on a corridor bench. Could this be something to do with a Conference at Prague? Can we expect defenestrations in due course? Time alone will tell. ♦ Prague or Harrogate, there can be no doubt that a Mexicon is indeed an ideal habitat for a...

Lounge Lizard

Editorial Correction

Maureen has very firmly asked us to apologise to Geoff Speller for getting his name wrong. We do so.

THANK YOU (FALETTIN ME BE MICE ELF AGAIN)

This has been the most heavily staffed CT ever; once upon a time it was just Mike Hamilton, then it was me, Mike and Anne Hammill, then it was homoeopathic, and this time, as far as Harry Bond can remember, the list is -- with number of times they've made this rotten computer crash:

Dave Langford (6 times), John Harvey,

Vince Clarke, Harry Bond (2½), Alison Scott (3), Oliver Grüter, Mike Abbott, Caroline Mullan (1), Mike Ford (2), Maureen Speller, George Speller, Mike Scott, Steven Glover, Paul Williams, Bernie Evans, Rhodri James, Ivan Towlson, Tim Illingworth, Neil Curry, Roger Perkins, Neil Gaiman, Graham England-Koch, Linda Strickler, Naomi James, Avedon Carol, and The Ghost of L Ron Hubbard (1).

Thanks also to Dave Mooring for the Sleeping Mexican, and Paul Williams's 100 Best for the 'right sillies' (© Bernie Peek 1989). And thank you all for coming.

Abigail Frost (8½)

CACTUS TIMES

Vol 3 Issue 7: 1 November 1991

You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet

MEXICON V

If you stayed to the bitter end of Mexican IV and came to the closing ceremony, you will have seen some lunatic up on the stage claiming that there were plans to do it all again. Well, six months on no-one seems to have got any saner, so I'm pleased to be able to tell you that Mexican V will take place over the Whitsun holiday weekend of May 28-31 1993. The staff at the Cairn Hotel in Harrogate are keen to have us again and to 'do it better next time', and, subject to suitable guarantees regarding the outcome of their receivership, we plan to return there. Good news is that some refurbishment work has already taken place, so we can expect to see an even better venue next time around.

Your committee has already started beavering away with plans to create a Mexican which lives up to the tradition of an outward-looking and stimulating event. Obviously, at this early stage we can't tell you much more than that, except that we are: **Mike Ford** (co-ordinator and moneykeeper); **Colin Harris**, **Maureen Speller**, **Mary Gentle** (programming); **Bernie Evans** (memberships); **Abigail Frost** (PRs); **Eve Harvey** (fannish matters); **John Harvey** (ops and other official arranging); **Linda Strickler** (hotel liaison); **Nic Farey** (technical things); and, by no means least, **Linda Krawecke** (i/c having fun). We're all looking forward to your company in 1993, so rush your money along to Bernie right now. **Mike Ford**

MEMBERSHIP RATES DROP!

More good news comes on the financial front. We've done our arithmetic again since Mexican IV, and have concluded that we can start the membership rate slightly lower than previously suggested. We've also decided to repeat the 'loyalty bonus', giving a small reduction to Mexican IV members who sign up early. The result of all this is that the standard membership rate will be £18 until at least Novacon 1992, when we will review the situation. Mexican IV members can get £2 off by joining before the end of 1991. **Mike Ford**

GLITTERING PRIZES

At the closing ceremony, quiz winner Caroline Mullan received the best of all possible prizes—a free Mexican V membership. (Those who have to pay for it, see above.) *CT* editor Abigail Frost (who'd been quietly seething when Dave Hodson seemed to have dropped her name off the credit-list) was overwhelmed when Tim Illingworth presented her with her share of the *Intermediate Reptile's* Eastercon award. So moved was she that she promptly handed the framed certificate to Roger Perkins, saying, 'Take it away and give it back at the Tun—I haven't room in my luggage.'

OBJETS TROUVÉS

A quantity of jewellery (part of someone's stock?) was found in the bookroom after Mexican IV. Colin Harris has the stuff (and would like to give it back, as wearing earrings ruins his yo-yo technique), so if you think it's yours, ring him on 0483 66223 with a brief description. If not claimed by Easter, it will be given for sale to a fan cause.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

The Hebden Bridge Mafia were almost re-united for the first time since 1984, as former *Matrix* editor and Leeds folk-demon Graham James visited Mexican on the Monday afternoon to collect Naomi and Dylan. The HBM—Graham, Mike Dickinson, Geoff Ryman, Paul Kincaid and Simon Ounsley—met in 1978 at an Arvon Foundation writers' course, and went on to glittering fannish and sf careers during the 1980s. The years rolled visibly off, though most were too con-worn to manage a chorus of *Alabama Song*. Though Simon was too ill to come to Mexican, he was actually in Harrogate, at his parents' house.

Leeds Groupie

NORTH OF THE BORDER

USexCo stormed the barns at the Edinburgh Festival this summer, to Colin Greenland's satisfaction despite lowish audiences (which applied to all of the Fringe) and an attempted runner by a venue manager (apparently alarmed by the audience figures). Scenes of despair and devastation ensued as the sound-system was repossessed, unpaid staff panicked and a lighting supplier stalked around with a fixed grin, moaning 'I'm ruined, I'm ruined'; but the manager was found, a borrowed PA system worked acceptably, and all was sweetness and light again.

THANKS AGAIN

Credits for issue 7 (Last Cactus Visions) go to Dave Langford (technical assistance, equipment and lunch) and committee members (information, even, nay especially, when I've lost it). *AJF*

Mexicon V Registrations: 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH

