

NEWCASTLE - UPON
-TYNE

25th - 28th MAY
1984



Welcome to this, our second Progress Report. As with others of its kind it serves the purpose of keeping you up to date on any developments, of showing you how convention membership is growing, and of proving that the committee are in fact still alive and functioning and haven't absconded with the convention funds.

As you will see when reading through, things are slowly but surely coming together and the response in terms of memberships, given that we're not yet actually into 1984 as I write, has been most heartening. Evidently our announced intention to concentrate on SF as a literary form, on the books and magazines that show SF at its most vital and original, rather than attempting to also cover its many and proliferating manifestations in other media, is one that appeals to many people.

What also appeals to them, no doubt, is the prospect of a fan programme that lifts the discussion of fazines beyond the trivial; the idea of a single continuous programme with items, whether fanish or science fictional, taking place in the same main con hall, and the committee's hope that no-one will attend one type of item to the exclusion of the other; the notion of films not usually seen at conventions that may well stretch their conception of just what SF is and which have been chosen not to merely provide a distraction but to form an integral part of the programme; and the fact that this will be a small, compact, and friendly convention where they'll have a real chance of meeting new people.

But then you know all this already. What you may not know - and

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what has puzzled a number of people - is how a convention being held in Newcastle came to be called MEXICON. Ah, thereby hangs a tale, and here to tell you all about it is Linda Pickeregill, in a piece she calls:

THE ORIGINS OF MEXICON

So why is a convention situated smack dab in the middle of Geordie-land called MEXICON? Is it really because Newcastle is twin-city to Tiajuana? Or because folks in the Highlands like to sing "South of the Border Down Newcastle Way"? Or because enchiladas go well with Newcastle Brown? The real answer lies in a situation that arose at CHANNELCON in Brighton during Easter of '82. Maybe you remember it as I do, especially those lull periods when the bars were shut and there seemed nothing better to do than sit around and mutter half-hearted complaints. This particular afternoon a committed group of us were seated near the bar in case by some freak circumstance it should open early, muttering away and airing our favourite gripes while watching as barbarian hordes and Logan's Runners ambled by. The muttering had to do with the changing nature of Eastercons (cross reference see: "Rob Hansen's Guide To Fannish Complaints" number 37). This rapidly aging gripe was about how the mass popularity of Science Fiction had broadened the definition of what was once primarily a written medium to include films, television, comics, computers, costumes, war games, and Star Trek porno. The conclusion was that written SF, both as literature and as a basis for fanzine culture, is now a fringe itself in the wider field of what is now known as "Sci-Fi". It's a sad day when you discover that your star is no longer the only one shining in the universe, so we griped and waited for the bar to open.

"What we really need", someone began, "is a special special interest group. Something truly fringe that we can claim to belong to and demand that the next Eastercon cater for us." "Yeah, but like what?" "Like Mexican fandom", Abi Frost threw at us. We all turned to stare at her. "You mean there is such a thing?", Gregory asked. "Oh, surely there must be somewhere... Mexican fans running around doing Mexicanly fannish type things. I don't see why Mexican fans should be neglected just because they're a small special interest group."

Things blossomed from there. We would become Mexican fandom and demand bi-lingual programme books and programmes catering to Mexican fans. We'd want siestas scheduled for the afternoons as well as tequila on demand and tacos served at the banquet. Our plans grew wild. Chris Evans suggested we all wear sombreros with "Keep Me Queek" badges on them as inspired by the 'souvenir of Brighton' hats he'd seen earlier that day. Greg suggested that we all wear tight black trousers with silver-spangled stripes running down the seams, and Harry Bell suggested bandeleros. Without realising it we had slipped into using a Hollywood style pseudo-Mexican accent and each new suggestion was greeted with many "arriba"s and "si si"s. "And we'll request that we have our very own Mexican badges", someone threw in, to which the unanimous reply was: "BADGES? We don't need no steenkin' badges!" (cross reference see: "Treasure of the Sierra Madre"). By this time the bar had opened at last and we all grabbed a drink to toast our identity as a fringe group: Mexican fandom....

...the kind who read SF and fanzines. Spontaneously we broke into Mexican-like song, "aye yi yi yi....". It was the only Mexican song we knew and even then we didn't know the rest of it so we just kept singing the same phrase over and over again: "aye yi yi yi...aye yi yi yi.....". Mexican fandom was born.

And there you have it. Now for an update on various aspects of the convention from those responsible for them.....

FILMS If you think that all Science Fiction convention films should feature spaceships and people wearing fishbowls on their heads then the MEXICON film programme is not for you. If, however, you believe that speculative cinema has as many facets as speculative fiction, I think we have some things to interest you...

There will be seven full-length movies at MEXICON, both classics and lesser-known items. They range from "The Man Who Would Be King" through "Alphaville" to "Celine and Julie Go Boating", a brilliant French film which we'll be showing for the first time at a British convention. We also have Kevin Brownlow's "It Happened Here", the mid-60s film about a Nazi occupation of London, and James Ivory's "Savages", another first. The full list will be announced nearer to the actual convention, as will the various cartoons and shorts which are presently being chosen. Since the films form a part of the main programme we hope they will all be well attended rather than becoming a beer-break, as they have at some recent cons. You'll just have to remember to buy two pints before you visit the hall!

.....JOHN JARROLD.

FANZINE ROOM It hardly seems like 1977 was the last time I ran a fanroom. It seems more like 1877. Faces and fanzines have changed some since then - some for the better - but the function of a fanzine room remains much the same; to give the producers an opportunity to reach new readers, and the new readers (and the old who aren't as active as they maybe ought to be) a chance to pick up on what's currently available.

Current fanzines form one leg of our tri-partite scheme, and in this specific regard we'd like all those who're intending to put out fanzines between now and MEXICON to run off a few extra with the idea of putting them out for sale (at nominal costs) in the fanzine room. Any and all types of fanzine welcome, from the determinedly serious to the most obscurely personal. Any faneditors who want to provide self-publicity are certainly encouraged to do so - the more gross and blatant the better.

Old fanzines are, in our view, equally important. The sort of junk you've got stuck somewhere that you can't get rid of or bring yourself to throw away may be just what someone else wants - if not to cherish forever then just to read and spill beer on in the fanroom. What we want to do is arrange a substantial mass of fanzines in some sort of sensible order so that people can generally root through them or leave them behind, whichever seems more appropriate.

Associated with the take-away library is a fanzine auction, a once

popular fannish event we're reviving out of sheer perversity. Most of the best and most famous stuff donated to the fairroom will be extracted for this, mainly in the hope that it won't just be used for beer-mats or nose-wipes and that individuals who are genuine fanzine enthusiasts and collectors will have a chance to pick up on interesting items. Prices will, as with the sales table, be probably pretty nominal, and we're planning on making the event as much an entertainment as anything else.

Regarding all the above, we at Mexican Central would like fanzine editors to tell us as soon as possible that they do intend offering material up for the sales table, and we'd like people with fanzine collections they can no longer contemplate keeping to actually get their stuff to either myself (Greg Pickersgill) or to Harry Bell at some time in advance of the convention, or at least as early on in the event as possible, so that it may be properly sorted.

We're also after displays, photos, and the like. If you see anything that entertains you bring or send it on and we'll find space for it.

Greg Pickersgill
7A Lawrence Rd.,
South Ealing
London W5 4XJ.

or, if more convenient:

Harry Bell
9 Lincoln St.,
Gateshead
Tyne & Wear NE8 4EE.

FAN PROGRAMME The fanzine programme will concentrate on intelligent discussion of those perennial topics of interest which fill fanzine lettercolumns. We hope to generate both heat and light.

Among the delights in store will be "Meet The Critics". Simon Ounsley, former MATRIX reviewer and editor of STILL IT MOVES, will be one of a number of critics putting individual views on the purpose and ideal form of fanzine reviews. Are critics just motivated by elitist bloodlust? Or is there some Higher Purpose, cruelly ignored by the multitude? Find out at MEXICON.

Another item, already mentioned, is the fanzine production workshop. Here I need your help. What do you potential fanzine editors (or even experienced ones) want to know about the physical production of a fanzine? Are there specific techniques such as, for instance, the patching-in of electrostencils onto ordinary stencils, that you particularly want to see demonstrated? Let us know.

Abi Frost
69 Robin Hood Gdns.,
Cotton St.,
London E 14.

And now we go over to Chris Evans for a few words on the serious....

SF PROGRAMME The SF programme will be designed to explore the current status of science fiction in its more ambitious and literary forms. It will discuss the state of the art and examine trends with a view to establishing what sort of future SF has as a distinct literary category, or whether it has a future at all.

Many important contemporary writers from Thomas Pynchon to Doris Lessing have begun to use SF motifs in their work, and the programme will explore the influence these writers are having on the field. It will also look at the role of the critic, the function of SF as a prophetic and socially conscious literature (with reference to Orwell), and the idea that SF may be an adolescent form of literature. On a more practical level, it will consider the present state of the marketplace, with editors and established writers on hand to offer advice to new writers.

Among the guests who have agreed to appear on the programme are the authors Russel Hoban, Christopher Priest, Richard Cowper, Robert Holdstock, and Lisa Tuttle; the critics Peter Nicholls and John Clute; and the editors Malcolm Edwards (of Gollancz) and Richard Evans (of Futura).

And, finally, we're currently investigating the possibility of doing something a little different - presenting the premiere of a play based on Philip K. Dick's last novel, THE TRANSMIGRATION OF TIMOTHY ARCHER, as adapted by Geoff Ryan.

THE HOTEL The main convention hotel is the Royal Station, scene of the original TYNECON of 1974. It's quite amazing to look down the present membership list and see many people who, whether (at the time) as young and innocent as Tony Johnston or as old and deprived as Harry Bell, will remember the the Royal Station as a far better than standard-issue convention hotel and will need little persuading to actually show up now that they've paid their membership. For those who've never experienced the hotel however, a few facts: The main con hall is on the first floor and has seating for more than 250 people, making it perfect for our purposes. Directly opposite the con hall is the convention bar, which is in turn adjacent to the fanzine room, to which you can retire to read old fanzines or just to listen to the music. And right next to this is the Continuity Room, where small impromptu events and group meetings can take place, with the Concom Squadroom nearby to provide ready assistance and instant information all through the convention. The bookroom is around the corner, off one of the large landings as ideal for hanging around on. Downstairs is the hotel lobby, a large circulating area where the registration desk will be, and leading off this is the main hotel bar which, like the others, are open until 2am as a matter of course, and will remain open as long as there is the trade to warrant doing so.

As a result of our good relationship with the management there will be low cost bar meals (£2-£3) in both restaurants from 12 noon-2.30pm and 6pm-10pm every day of the convention, and because of the manager's fascination with the idea of 'MEXICON' there's a high

likelihood these will include chili, tacos, refried beans, and esoteric stuff like that, with Mexican-style drinks also available in the bars.

The room rates we've negotiated are really quite good in 1984 terms - cheaper than at some conventions held in 1983, in fact - as can be seen on the booking form enclosed with this Progress Report.

As far as rooms go we have 165 beds allocated to us in the Royal Station and a minimum of 70 so far in the overflow hotel, the County, which is quite literally across the road - a whole 40 yards away. As we have 150 people signed up already anyone determined to be in the main hotel should send back their booking form as soon as possible.

REGISTRATION We would prefer registration money in advance of the convention. If booking rooms for people not yet registered please send their registration money along with your booking forms. Make cheques payable to MEXICON.

ADVERTISING Whilst we do not intend carrying advertising in Progress Reports we do intend offering space for sale in the Programme Book. At present we don't have any firm policy or rates set. If anyone is interested in buying space in the Programme Book they should contact Rob Hansen, 9A Greenleaf Rd., East Ham, London E6 1DX, as soon as possible and they will receive all the relevant information when it is available.

BOOKROOM Harry Bell (address as FANZINE ROOM) will be organising the Bookroom, and although rates have not yet been finalised any enquiries to him from professional or fan dealers will be responded to as soon as things are settled. We're especially hoping to attract dealers carrying stock perhaps not normally associated with Science Fiction conventions, but lacking this the usual Heinleins and Asimovs will just have to do.

FINALLY... and incredible as it may sound, the concept of MEXICON has come under attack from two different and entirely unexpected directions. One group seem convinced it will be nothing more than a frivolous and entirely social fannish-type convention, with virtually no 'serious' content, while another side has run away with the idea that MEXICON intends to be wholly hard-core serious and constructive with no room for the more 'casual' aspects of conventioning. Neither of these is of course true. MEXICON steers a deliberate and determined middle-course, and is as true to it now as when it was first conceived. A glance at Chris Evans' SF programming and John Jarrold's film-list will confirm there's enough to satisfy the discriminating side of the brain. Abigail Frost's fanzine-oriented items and the fanzine room will provide the bridge and the Newcastle end of the con committee, after they've completed their ideological and hotel liaison roles, will use the experience they've gained from many SILICONS (the most social and fannish convention of them all) to provide entertainments in the form of games, both rough and more or less intellectual. The 'rough' games will be hidden behind a discreet veil for the moment (though veterans of the YORCON 2 fanroom may have some idea of what's in store), but the quizzes are justifiably convention favourites and will take several forms. More on the exact nature later, but teams are

needed, especially those representative of fan-groups. If you are interested please contact Kevin Williams, 19 Jesmond Dene Rd., Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 3QT, to put yourself in line to win decent prizes (no cheap wine this time!). Evening and 'People's' discos are also planned.

Memberships received to date:

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| 1. MARTIN RUMNEY | 49. ROCHELLE DOREY |
| 2. ROBERT HOLDSTOCK | 50. ALEX STEWART |
| 3. VINCENT CLARKE | 51. JOHN MURPHY |
| 4. JIM BARKER | 52. DAVE ELLIS |
| 5. JOHN HARVEY | 53. KEVIN SMITH |
| 6. EVE HARVEY | 54. DIANA SMITH |
| 7. GREG PICKERSGILL | 55. PHIL JAMES |
| 8. LINDA PICKERSGILL | 56. D.WEST |
| 9. ROB HANSEN | 57. PAUL KINCAID |
| 10. JOHN JARROLD | 58. PAUL WILLIAMS |
| 11. ABIGAIL FROST | 59. LOUISE WILLIAMS |
| 12. PAM WELLS | 60. DAVE HICKS |
| 13. PHIL PALMER | 61. IAN WILLIAMS |
| 14. STEVE LAWSON | 62. TONY JOHNSTON |
| 15. CHRIS EVANS | 63. KATE MOORE |
| 16. CHRIS PRIEST | 64. IAN MAULE |
| 17. LISA TUTTLE | 65. JANICE MAULE |
| 18. KEVIN WILLIAMS | 66. NEIL THOMPSON |
| 19. SUE WILLIAMS | 67. JAYNE WHITTAKER |
| 20. ARNOLD ALIEN | 68. BRIAN ALDISS |
| 21. HARRY BELL | 69. GEOFF RYMAN |
| 22. DARROLL PARDOE | 70. JIMMY ROBERTSON |
| 23. ROSEMARY PARDOE | 71. JOHN STYLES |
| 24. JOHN WILKES | 72. TISS |
| 25. FRANCES J. NELSON | 73. RICHARD VINE |
| 26. PAUL VINCENT | 74. NICK LOWE |
| 27. DAVE COCKFIELD. | 75. MARGARET WELBANK |
| 28. OWEN WHITEOAK | 76. STEVE GREEN |
| 29. ANDY FIRTH | 77. TOM TAYLOR |
| 30. JULIE FLEMING | 78. KATE DAVIES |
| 31. DAVID BRIDGES | 79. RICHARD EDWARDS |
| 32. ROB JACKSON | 80. ROGER PERKINS |
| 33. CORAL JACKSON | 81. ANN THOMAS |
| 34. MIKE HAMILTON | 82. MARINA HOLROYD |
| 35. SIMON OUNSLY | 83. LAURA WHEATLEY |
| 36. ROZ KAVENEY | 84. KEVAN GRAYSON |
| 37. ALUN HARRIES | 85. KEVIN HENWOOD |
| 38. BRIAN SMITH | 86. BRUCE SAVILLE |
| 39. DAVE LANGFORD | 87. IAIN C. THOMAS |
| 40. HAZEL LANGFORD | 88. JEREMY JOHNSON |
| 41. NEIL HEPPLÉ | 89. IANIN DICKSON |
| 42. SUE HEPPLÉ | 90. AUDREY KELLGW |
| 43. TONY BERRY | 91. OSCAR DALGLEISH |
| 44. BOB DAY | 92. R. SNEDDON |
| 45. DAI PRICE | 93. DAVE WILKINSON |
| 46. MAUREN PORTER | 94. MARTIN TUDOR |
| 47. RICHARD COWPER | 95. LUCY HUNTZINGER |
| 48. ALAN DOREY | 96. JOHN WALLACE |

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| 97. | ALLISON WALLACE | 125. | PETER WESTON |
| 98. | KENNETH LAKE | 126. | COLIN SMITH |
| 99. | PAUL OLDROYD | 127. | JOHN STEWARD |
| 100. | CHRIS DONALDSON | 128. | ASHLEY WATKINS |
| 101. | MARK HANSEN | 129. | MAL ASHWORTH |
| 102. | ANN LOOKER | 130. | CAROLINE MULLAN |
| 103. | DAVID BELL | 131. | ANNE WARREN |
| 104. | JOYCE SLATER | 132. | KEN SLATER |
| 105. | GARY KILWORTH | 133. | CHRISTINA LAKE |
| 106. | ANNETTE KILWORTH | 134. | LILIAN EDWARDS |
| 107. | MIKE FORD | 135. | JOHN PAUL SMITH |
| 108. | COLIN FINE | 136. | ROBERT STUBBS |
| 109. | DUNCAN BOOTH | 137. | MARTIN SMITH |
| 110. | MICKEY POLAND | 138. | PAUL DORMER |
| 111. | PETER COHEN | 139. | KAY ALLAN |
| 112. | LINDA JAMES | 140. | VINCENT DOHERTY |
| 113. | ROY MACINSKI | 141. | JOSEPH NICHOLAS |
| 114. | GLEN WARMINGER | 142. | JUDITH HANNA |
| 115. | GRAHAM POOLE | 143. | MIKE SHERWOOD |
| 116. | JAN POOLE | 144. | ROGER ROBINSON |
| 117. | PETE LYON | 145. | MARTIN HOARE |
| 118. | RICHARD SMITH | 146. | KATIE HOARE |
| 119. | TIM ILLINGWORTH | 147. | HELEN MCNABB |
| 120. | ANDREW ROSE | 148. | JAMES BRUNTON |
| 121. | SUSAN FRANCIS | 149. | DAVE WOOD |
| 122. | IAN SORENSON | 150. | |
| 123. | MIKE DAMESICK | 151. | ANDY ROBERTSON. |
| 124. | SUE THOMASON | | |

List complete as of December 4th 1983.