

18-20 August 1995

Hertfordpark Hotel

Stevenage

PRECURSOR



SOUVENIR PROGRAMME BOOK

Welcome to PRECURSOR, the convention for those who can't afford INTERSECTION and those rich gods who can afford both. This all-expenses spared leaflet is the programme and should be read immediately as it includes all manner of information vital to your enjoyment of the convention, spiritual health, and regular bowel movements. Should you have any queries the committee will be glad to help you with them. We are, of course, Rob Hansen, John & Eve Harvey, and Martin Smith, though just for a laugh we'll be wearing badges identifying us as Joseph Nicholas, Dan & Lynn Steffan, and Martin Smith. We'll be delighted to answer all your questions in detail and at length. And now, the programme... well, not just yet.....

MEALS

Breakfast in the Village Restaurant

Saturday 7 a.m. – 10 a.m.

Sunday 7.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.

Bar snacks will be available 12 noon – 2 p.m. and 7 – 10 p.m.

THE BAR

The hotel bar will be open till LATE!! This means whilst there are enough people still buying drinks, the bar will stay open. So if you want to drink into the early hours, it's up to you to keep the bar staff busy.

The bar serves Worthington Best Bitter, Tennant's Pilsner and Tennant's Extra, or for those of you who have some buds, Caffrey's Irish Bitter. They also have a wide selection of bottled beers from around the world. If you can't survive the weekend without a pint of Riggley's Old Piddley or Nobby's Prize Ale or some equally unlikely brew, try Stevenage Old Town.

Free drinks

There aren't any! Well, that's not quite true. Late Saturday there'll be a cheese and punch party to help Bridget Hardcastle celebrate her birthday.

Cheap drinks

There are some. The hotel is putting on a 'Happy Hour' Friday 8-10 p.m. when all drinks are half price!

Programme Sheet

The programme starts at 1:00 pm on Saturday since any programming on Friday would only interfere with the serious business of getting acquainted with each other and with the bar. This is a social relaxa~~con~~, after all. There is no programming before 1:00 pm on Saturday itself since this would only interfere with the serious business of recovering from the serious business of getting acquainted with each other and with the bar the night before. All times are ish; as for the running order:

FANZINE READINGS (Starts 1:00 pm-ish)

Yes, this is actually what it sounds like but, having seen how well these work at US cons we've decided to try one at PRECURSOR. We're sure you'll enjoy it. No, really.

HAVE WE GOT FANDOM FOR YOU (Starts around 2:00 pm)

Loosely (very loosely) based on the TV quiz show 'Have I Got News For You', this will pit teams of fans against each other in an allegedly topical contest. Angus Deayton, quizmaster of the TV show, is often referred to as 'The Thinking Woman's Crumpet', so we naturally chose as our quizmaster his fannish equivalent, Rob Hansen (Brian Burgess was unavailable). Correct answers will be awarded two points each while answers which are wrong but sufficiently witty or amusing may also be awarded a point at the discretion of the quizmaster, whose decision in these matters shall be final. Those contestants hoping to predispose the quizmaster toward favourable decisions on their behalf are advised to ply him with drinks in the bar beforehand. This won't in any way influence him, but they're advised to do it anyway. No actual prizes will be awarded, but the winners will have the satisfaction and almost spiritual sense of fulfilment that comes from knowing they've ground their opponents into the dust.

There will then be a break, followed by:

QUESTION TIME (Commencing about, oh let's see, 3:30pm or so)

Will the Internet destroy Fandom As We Know It? How can we attract more people to fandom? Why is Martin Smith? Fannish cons usually have an item where the burning fannish issues of the day are debated, and PRECURSOR will be no exception, though ours takes a somewhat different form than usual. Joseph Nicholas will be moderating a panel of opinionated fans (okay, particularly opinionated fans), much as the trainer 'moderates' the lions in a circus show, who will each train their cosmic minds on questions from the audience. Lively debate and audience participation will doubtless ensue and Joseph will attempt to maintain order. Good luck, pal.

With this deluxe Programme Leaflet, you will have received an expensively crafted file card, personally hand-tooled by the equally hand-tooled Martin Smith (sorry - reflex action). If you have a question you'd like to hear the panel debate, please write it and your name on the card and return it to Joseph, or one of the committee, preferably no later than a half-hour before this item. Questions should be as wittily phrased as possible and can be either serious or frivolous. (If you want the panel to debate the iconic significance of Martin Smith's pyjamas we'll certainly consider it). We'll make a selection of those we're most intrigued or amused by and return these to their authors to be read from the audience when we call that person's name. Please do your best to come up with a question as the more there are to choose from the higher the likely quality of those we use.

MEAL BREAK

THE TALK SHOW

(9:30 pm sound good to you? Sounds good to me, too...)

Do you miss Johnny Carson? Do you pine for Jonathan Woss? Then your prayers may have been answered. With the charisma of John Major and the interviewing skills of Marcel Marceau, Martin Smith will be talking to high-profile celebrities from the glitzy and glamorous world of international fandom. This is the item to attend for an insight into the wit, the wonder, and the bizarre sexual practices that have made fandom what it is today.

CHEESE & PUNCH PARTY

(11:30 p.m-ish)

Free punch (alcoholic & non-alcoholic) and a chance to savour some of English cheeses and help Bridget celebrate at one minute past midnight. It's everyone's duty to make sure Bridget has a birthday she can never forget – even if she wants to!

This item concludes Saturday's official programme. Thereafter you are encouraged to drink, talk, make merry, and to enjoy any sexual assignments you may have been fortunate enough to make, because on Sunday there awaits:

THE MARTIN SMITH SOFTBALL CHALLENGE (noonish)

No, this will not involve tests of testicular rigidity. Softball is actually a (gaspl) sport, not unlike rounders. At the insistence of Martin Smith, who has all the equipment and is dying to use it (no jokes, please), typically unfit UK fans will be playing with or against typically unfit US fans in a battle of wits, wills, and waistlines. Immensely popular at the American CORFLU, these games are legendary among fans and paramedics across the US. Anyone wishing to participate in the game should contact Martin as soon as possible rather than waiting for the tacky and rather unseemly draft that may follow.

Additional threads will run through PRECURSOR:

POOL TOURNAMENT

Fancy yourself as the next Minnesota Fats, Mississippi Slim, or Northants Chuch? Then here's your chance to prove it. Anyone interested in taking part in this should contact Eve Harvey as early as possible clutching a £1 coin in their grubby little hands. The tournament will start on Friday run throughout the convention until no-one is left standing. The prize for the winner? They get their £1 back!

GUERRILLA CHARADES

No, we won't be expecting you to mime the names of famous revolutionaries – but from time to time, if and when we think it's a good idea, we may be starting up impromptu rounds of Charades. As good fen and true, you may well snort derisively at the notion, but are you smart enough to effectively mime a fanzine title such as INTERMEDIATE VECTOR BOSONS? You may find out.

[These programme notes were written by Rob Hansen, who takes all credit for them, (except for the bits Eve Harvey added – typist power rules OK) with production by John Harvey, to whom he happily assigns all blame for any typos and grammatical infelicities.]

The Role of Honour

Mike Abbott	Bridget Hardcastle	Carol Root
Alyson Abramowitz	Alun Harries	Vicki Rosenzweig
Brian Ameringen	Chuck Harris	Martin Smith
Jill Armstrong-Bridges	Eve Harvey	Martha Soukup
Keith Armstrong-Bridges	John Harvey	Dan Steffan
Austin Benson	Jack Heneghan	Lynn Steffan
Avedon Carol	Andrew Hooper	Geri Sullivan
Vincent Clarke	Cedric Knight	Michael R Walsh
Chris Croughton	Christina Lake	Nina Watson
Arthur Cruttenden	Caroline Mullan	Pam Wells
Rafe Culpin	Joseph Nicholas	Lynda White
Mike Ford	Patrick Nielsen-Hayden	Ted White
Abigail Frost	Teresa Nielsen-Hayden	Janet Wilkins
Jenny Glover	Keith Oborn	Anne Wilson
Judith Hanna	Neil Rest	Jim Young
Rob Hansen	Peter Roberts	

OUT AND ABOUT

Stevenage is a schizophrenic town – the new town doesn't bear thinking about, but the old town has a certain charm. In the new town you'll find no restaurants of note unless you're a McDonalds freak. But there is the indoor market with a nice little Indian food & spice stall, and there's the outdoor market just 200 yards from the hotel. The old town is found by using the bridge behind Tesco. Continue straight along the road when you get off the bridge and this turns into the High Street. About a 10-15 minute walk.

Restaurants

The choice is either Indian or Chinese, but all pretty good (well, we've tried the Chinese, the Indians look OK). The restaurants are all along the High Street in the Old Town and are listed in the order in which you reach them from the hotel.

Dew Drop Inn	Looks like a converted café but offers an OK standard of Chinese.
Mohan Tandoori Bombay	No, this one's not Chinese. Looks reasonable from the outside, as does the which is just across the road.
The Jade Garden	offers a rather more up-market, somewhat OTT decor but surprisingly is not that much more expensive than the Dew Drop. And, finally, there's the
Taj Mahal	which isn't Chinese either.

That's All Folks!