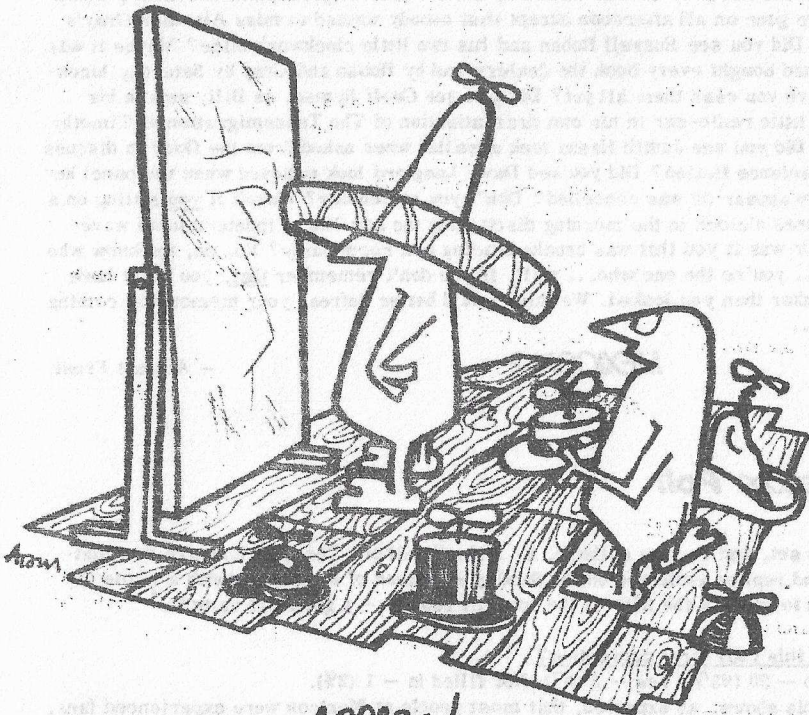


MEXICON 2

FEBRUARY 1986

Progress Report 1



ARRIBA!

Remember the Alamo?

OK then, maybe you remember the Mexican? Were you one of the people who had an uncanny moment of recognition as you saw the same carpet you last trod on in 1974? Or was it your first convention, and did you wonder what the hell was going on when Kevin Williams presented an opening slide-show full of pictures of famous authors levitating loaves of bread and other sillier things? Did you sympathise with Margaret Welbank when Peter Nicholls suddenly asked her to say something about censorship and she couldn't think of a word to say? Maybe you were in the bar at the time or searching for treasures in the great piles of other people's youthful indiscretions in the fanzine room? But even if you didn't see, you must have heard the megadecibel nuclear blasts of Atomic Cafe, turned up to full volume by the Riverside PA crew, or the impromptu round-the-piano sing-song before the Saturday night disco. Were you one of the thirty or so who turned up for the fanzine production workshop, which could have gone on all afternoon except that nobody wanted to miss Alasdair Gray's reading? Did you see Russell Hoban and his two little clockwork mice? Maybe it was you who had bought every book the dealers had by Hoban and Gray by Saturday lunch-time? Have you read them all yet? Did you see Geoff Ryman, as Bill, smash his precious little radio-car in his own dramatisation of *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*? Did you see Judith Hanna look appalled when asked from the floor to discuss feminist science fiction? Did you see Dave Langford look relieved when the panel he was due to appear on was cancelled? Don't you remember? Wasn't it you sitting on a sofa at three o'clock in the morning discussing the sex-life of indeterminate wave-forms? Or was it you that was break-dancing at a room party? No, no, we know who you are... you're the one who... well, if you don't remember that, you must have been drunker than you looked. We think you'd better refresh your memory by coming along to...

MEXICON 2

— Abigail Frost

The Mexican Poll

Questions set, and replies collated, by Mike Hamilton. The questionnaire was distributed and replies collected on the Sunday afternoon of Mexican 1 (with a whole day of the con to go). Of the 250+ at the con, 54 replied — a good 20% sample.

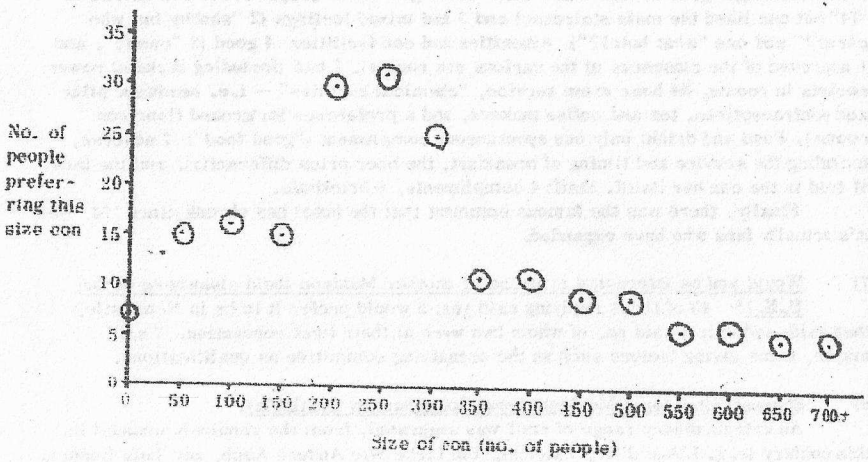
1) Is this your first convention?

No — 50 (93%); Yes — 3 (6%); Not filled in — 1 (2%).

This shows, as expected, that most people at Mexican were experienced fans, who had probably signed up at other cons or through the fan grapevine somehow. There were 38 walk-ins and around 25 local people who joined by post before the con, of whom many were already known within fandom — so the reasonably wide media and arts group coverage didn't bring many new sf readers to the con. (As opposed to viewers?)

2) What size of convention do you enjoy the most?

Discounting the three whose first con it was (who wouldn't, obviously, have known other cons) Mike has prepared a graph of the sizes people quoted. 62% of those replying thought cons of 250 people enjoyable, while only 18% thought cons of 450 were as much fun.



3) What item of this convention did you enjoy the most?

Six people commented that it was too early to tell (with justification, as it has turned out: most commentators after the con have picked the play, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, as the major artistic highlight of Mexican 1). Selected replies include: Alasdair Gray (3), Russell Hoban (1), Richard Cowper talk (1), The bar (5), Drinking (3), People (5), It felt right (1), Bed (2), Atomic Cafe (5), Fanzine room (4), Disco (4), and Didn't attend any of the programme (reason for not answering the question) (3).

4) What item of this convention did you like the least?

Five people didn't answer, one liked it all, one wrote "nothing", one said "Having to leave it at times", and one "Can't remember any." Specific answers included Disco (7), Pink Flamingoes (5), higher drink prices in the con's private bar than the downstairs public one (4), beer (3), food (3), waking up (2), and "encountering creditors" (1).

5) Is there something missing from this con which you think would have improved it?

Nine people didn't answer or said "no." Others included reasonable food (5), Bar times (3), real ale (2), free money (2), more normal sf films (2), Bob Shaw (2), and one each for free Cointreau, helium-filled dustbin liners in the stairwell, an other consuming party, live sex, the Dagenham Girl Pipers, Simon Ounsley, Helen Elling, a banquet at Al-Firdous, alternate years of films and unusual videos, a creche, and midnight snacks. Someone wanted a Star Trek room.

6) What did you think of the hotel?

27 thought it OK or better, and 19 thought it OK but with minor reservations: I have counted all the specific comments and listed them by categories as follows: Decor & surroundings: good 2, bad 4 (two said "same god-awful carpet in the con hall as in '74" but one liked the main staircase) and 3 had mixed feelings (2 "shabby but who cares?" and one "what hotel?"). Amenities and con facilities: 4 good (3 "comfy", and 1 approved of the closeness of the various con rooms), 7 bad (including lacks of power sockets in rooms, 24 hour room service, "chemical supplies" — i.e. headache pills and contraceptives, tea and coffee makers, and a preference for ground floor con rooms). Food and drink: only one spontaneous compliment ("good food"); 7 adverse, including the service and timing of breakfast, the beer price differential, and the lack of food in the con bar itself. Staff: 4 compliments, 6 brickbats.

Finally, there was the famous comment that the hotel had shrunk since '74. No: it's actually fans who have expanded.

7) Would you be interested in attending another Mexicon (held elsewhere in the U.K.)?

43 of those replying said yes; 5 would prefer it to be in Newcastle, they said; and only 4 said no, of whom two were at their first convention. 7 said maybe, some giving factors such as the organising committee as qualifications.

8) Suggest films for a Mexicon (those not generally available).

An extraordinary range of stuff was suggested, from the genuinely unusual in this country (e.g. L'Age d'Or, Zatoichi, Ein Liebe Wie Andere Auch, any Luis Bunuel, any French Surrealist stuff, and the Yugoslav film The Switchboard Operator, plus some animated shorts), to the determinedly lowbrow (Godzilla, Grappa the Triphibian Monster, The Green Slime) and the really silly (The Railway Children, a spaghetti Western, Monty Python, porn) via stuff which has been widely available either in cinemas or at coas (Bladerunner, Dark Star, Somewhere in Time) and a lot of other unclassifiable but useful suggestions.

9) How many books do you own?

40 calculable replies gave a total of just over 84,000 books, or an average of just over 2,100 each.

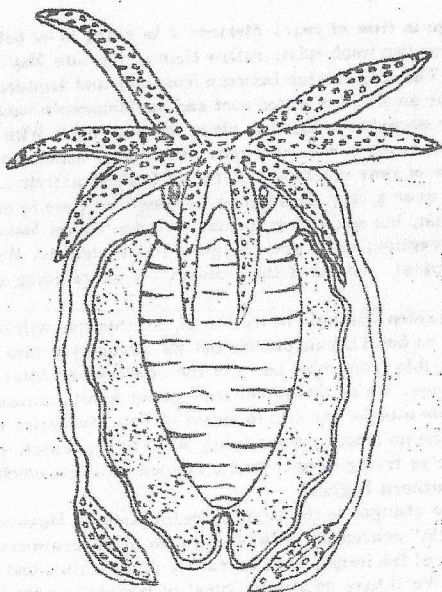
10) Any other comments?

31, including "I think Mexicon was stimulating, intelligent, attended by interesting and friendly talkative people who really wanted to be there," "What are you, the Gestapo whith all these questionnaires?", "Where the hell am I going to get time to loc all these fanzines?", "Was the programme really necessary? It would be interesting to know how many people attended the serious items," "The problem with having only one programme is that there are no alternatives, except for sitting around drinking," "Where were the hotel security? I missed them so much," "Play it again," "More, much more please. But — one extra-special plea: sf writer guests, please — not "speculative fiction" cop-outs!!" (I disagree — Ed.), and of course "Fun, fun, fun! We don't need no steeeking questionnaires." No comments criticised the con as a whole; a few picked up small specific points or made personal comments; most were variations on "Good stuff — let's do it again."

Which is why you're getting a Mexicon 2 Progress Report 1.

— Mike Hamilton, edited by Rob Jackson

earth



is the only alien planet

MEXICON 2 - THE IDEA

It was during the last fevered moments of the Monday morning auction at Tynescon 2 - The Mexicon that we fell headlong into a commitment to Mexicon 2. We'd auctioned off our cactus, sombrero, and bullet-holed backdrop - all we had left was the promise of more. "Hands up everybody who'd come to another Mexicon," said Gregory

in a moment of excessive zeal. Hands flew up everywhere. "Okay, then bring your money right now to this woman right here," he shouted, dragging Pam Wells and a moneybox onto the stage. She took their money and I took their names. Something in the back of my brain was telling me (this was going to mean More Work and Pain but I was having too much fun to really care. Viva La Convention!

So, basically what we're doing is running Mexicon 2 because the first Mexican worked. A good number of people showed up (280 at the final count) to support and participate in a convention distinctly catering to fans of written literary-oriented science fiction, fanzine fandom, and Desperate Fun. We believe we can run another con that carries on the same basic principles of the first but without being simply a repeat of the original. That's why there'll be a few changes made from the format of Tynecon 2.

First change is time of year. Mexicon 2 is going to be held in early February 1986 (one of the first two weekends), rather than at the late May Bank Holiday as was the first Mexican. The long stretch between Novacon and Eastercon has always been talked of as time for an Event of some sort and as Mexicon's basic rationale is to fill a need, what better occasion is there to place the next one? With more, and more regular, conventions being held in spring or summer it makes good sense to hold a convention at a time of year otherwise barren of fanish activity. Besides, placing the convention well over a year ahead gives us plenty of time to organise not just another good convention, but something special. We don't want Mexicon to become just another routine convention; there are enough of those already. We want to prepare something alive, topical, and out of the ordinary. If we're doing another Mexican we want to do it right.

The first Mexican was held in the North, so this one will be held in the South. We're still working on hotel arrangements but we assure you that the convention site will be easily accessible from most parts of the country and hotel rates will be kept within a sensible range. We're taking our time about hotel arrangements because we want the best possible site for the con in terms of hotel facilities and price (the best in hotel function space no longer comes free), ease of transport, good nearby restaurants and shops. We're trying hard to find a London site that combines the best of these, or central southern England.

What won't be changed is the basic principle behind Mexicons. We still plan on organizing a "no frills" convention with one stream of programming devoted to written science fiction, topical fan items, unusual rarely shown films and our infamous silly games and quizzes. We'll have no single "guest of honour" as the idea of Mexicon is to draw on the ideas, information and opinions of many guests, both professional and otherwise who work regularly within the science fiction field and community and have something worthwhile to say. Basically we still stand for the principle that Mexicon is a convention of ideas while at the same time providing a social gathering for like-minded people. The membership as a whole is just as important as any one guest or speaker in that we expect challenges, questioning, opinions and participation from all.

If you had an enjoyable time at Tynecon 2 - The Mexican last May we hope that you'll want to support us in our efforts to put on Mexicon 2 by sending in your membership fee soon or visiting our table at Novacon. If you missed the first one I hope you've heard enough favourable reports to encourage you to attend in February '86. All feedback on any aspect of Mexicon at all is always welcome.

Viva La Convention!

-- Linda Pickersgill

WORKSHOPPING

The programme? Ah yes, the programme. Well, there will be one, hopefully up to - or even improving upon - the standard of the first Mexican. But don't ask me about it yet. After all, one of the reasons that Mexican II won't be happening until February 1986 is that it takes a lot of thought and a lot of planning to do a good job of organising a convention. We're taking the time because we want to get it right.

That applies especially to the programme, so although the committee are all sparking ideas off each other, we were not going to start talking about specific plans and projects. Not yet. First we want to be sure we have one or two overall themes linking most of the programme items, to give the programme extra relevance and extra coherence to the whole con.

One thing is specific already, though. We are all agreed that one thread we hope will run through the whole convention is the idea of creativity. And one way to achieve that is to organise workshops. So, as part of the convention there is to be a short story workshop, as well as a follow-up to the successful fanzine workshop of last Mexican.

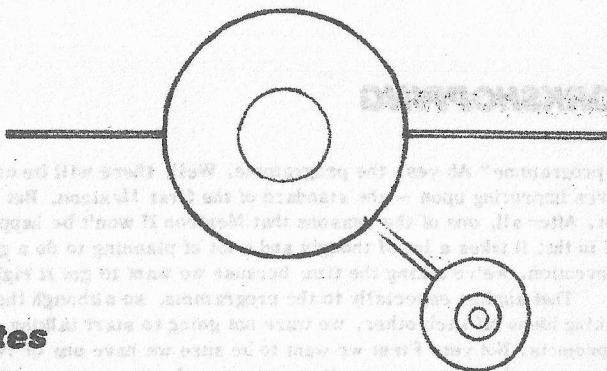
The short story workshop in particular takes a fair bit of advance planning, especially on the part of those of you who fancy yourselves the next Arthur Clarke or Brian Aldiss or Christopher Priest. After all, you'll have stories to write. So we thought we'd give you advance notice of our plans. There'll be further information, including details of how to get into the workshop since there won't be the time or facilities to make it open to all, in future Progress Reports. Just don't say we didn't give you enough warning - you've only got fifteen months to go!

- Paul Kincaid

Memberships

List complete as at 24.9.84.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Rog Peyton | 16. Kate Moore |
| 2. Colin Fine | 17. Mike Hamilton |
| 3. Tim Illingworth | 18. Kate Davies |
| 4. Dave Ellis | 19. Malcolm Davies |
| 5. Caroline Mullan | 20. Woofie Bear |
| 6. Brian Ameringen | 21. Ken Slater |
| 7. Brian Smith | 22. Mike Ford |
| 8. Roger Robinson | 23. Owen Whiteoak |
| 9. Julian Headlong | 24. Paul Vincent |
| 10. Alex Stewart | 25. Harry Bell |
| 11. Susan Francis | 26. Greg Pickersgill |
| 12. Rob Jackson | 27. Linda Pickersgill |
| 13. Coral Jackson | 28. Pam Wells |
| 14. Moira Shearman | 29. Steve Green |
| 15. Anthony Johnston | 30. Paul Kincaid |



Membership rates

Up till 31 December 1984: £6.00. } Attending membership only.
 From 1 January 1985: £9.00. }

Committee, addresses

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 Pam Wells
 Abigail Frost
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Advertising

Advertisements may be placed in our Progress Reports and in the Programme Book. At this early stage, details for the Programme Book have not been finalised, but for the Progress Reports they are as follows.

<u>Rates:</u>	<u>Professional</u>	<u>Fan/Amateur</u>
Back cover	£20.00	£15.00
Full page	£16.00	£8.00
Half page	£10.00	£5.00
Quarter page	£6.00	£3.00

Technical details: Page size A4 for reduction to A5, or appropriate proportions thereof. Allow adequate margins (1" top and bottom, and $\frac{3}{4}$ " at the sides). In the Progress Reports, only black-and-white line copy suitable for electrostencilling at a reduced size will be accepted. Inserts may be accepted at the convention committee's discretion.

Deadlines: Contact Linda Pickersgill, or Rob Jackson at the address below, for details.

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