



The mysteries of Port Adelaide are revealed, more or less, on this cover photo, taken back in August 1999, when Claire Briarley, Dave Langford, Yvonne Rousseau and Mark Plummer were trapped into posing for the camera. Maureen Kincaid Speller and Paul Kincaid were smart enough to escape the intrusive lens - except that they did so by watching Morris dancers (Morris dancers in Port Adelaide!), making one wonder whether the cure was worse than the disease.

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The inspiring sight on the cover is, alas, one from which we must descend into the lower depths.

Hard to believe as it might be, not everyone has leapt to embrace the new technology which **eFNAC** was meant to use. George Flynn is an atypical reader, it would seem:

On what seems to be the burning question: I have no problem reading it on-screen, but I print it out anyway (2 up and double-sided, so I get four screens to the sheet), partly for archival purposes (deep down, I don't think I really trust that anything electronic will be around indefinitely; and yes, I know that the same is true of paper) and partly for ease in showing it to other people. For what it's worth

. . .

Not atypical in that George prints out his copy of the fanzine - but rather in that he admits to being able to read it on-screen. Robert Lichtman was one of the first to go into detail about *his* printing methods but, although there are slight variations, the common element is the use of paper (the one thing I *don't* use) and hence it is appropriate to think of this group (which means almost everyone but me) as *papists*.

As a devout *anti-papist* I'm opposed to this sort of behaviour. But as a practising realist I have to bow to the inevitable. And although it will be to the disadvantage of those who like me do their reading on-screen, I've reformatted this issue (in part) to make it easier for the papists. In particular these pages, in portrait format, will fit more comfortably onto standard paper; but recognising that there may be some blessed souls who still read on screen, I've tried to make their lives simpler by going over to single-column format.

I've also removed most of the photographs. By separating them from the main text I have removed any real need for printing them out. They now appear as part B of **eFNAC**. If you want these, and didn't get them when you got this part (part A), just send me an email with subjectline 'FNAC3b'. This month includes Allan Bray's photographic coverage of EASTERCON '79 in Melbourne - but the cover is a photo of Melbourne 'fandom' in July 1961, taken by Mervyn Barrett.

Otherwise this issue has a stack of letters, more stuff about Malaysia, Bob Smith's con-report, a new column (on bookbuying) to which I invite contributions, but not the promised piece about Katherine Cummings et al., which has been delayed by editorial inertia, and also Faction Fight 'N', mentioned in passing in the next section. I'll try to get that one done for the next issue, along with others - oh, the hell with it, let's have a new section.

NOOZ FROM OZ

There's plenty - but not in this issue. Around the time the previous **eFNAC** appeared, a mailing list was started in order to discuss national sf conventions in Australia. It hasn't actually been active for four weeks yet, and just over 400 posts have already been produced. Phew, what a scorcher, etc.

Fuller discussion of this in the next issue when some clarity about what fans in Australia want will (one hopes) have emerged - which will definitely be held produced late in May (if not actually in June): As I write this I've just had two weeks' notice to go to work in South Africa for three weeks, and this will interrupt seriously the production of a pseudo-monthly fanzine!

A Book-buyer's Notes

John Foyster

Few readers of these pages would be able with a clear conscience to deny that they were book-buyers at a rate somewhat above average for their town/city/country. As one author puts it:

My principal delight, when very young, was to frequent the only bookseller's shop our little town afforded, where I would stand for hours reading, or rather devouring, whatever books, or, as my dear grandfather termed it, mental food, I could lay hold of. There was also an old woman who had a circulating library, consisting of about a hundred volumes, chiefly novels, to whom I disbursed every sixpence and shilling I received for pocket money. My parents, indeed (for by this term I shall in future, for brevity's sake, call my grandfather and grandmother, as it is from them only I ever experienced parental affection; they, I say) did not wholly approve of this indiscriminate passion for reading; fearing, and indeed with reason, as I am now convinced, that I should meet with matter tending to vitiate a young mind (which has justly been compared to a sheet of white paper, open to receive and retain the first impressions), and to inculcate romantic notions of men and manners.

Not all of us, however, would expect to have the fate of the author of the above, James Hardy Vaux, who has the distinction of having thrice been transported to New South Wales (in 1801, 1809, and 1830) and who describes his life of crime in his *Memoirs* (first published 1819).

I shall return to Flash Jim later. Book-buying as a habit is not, however, timebound, and we may recognise in the young Vaux of two centuries ago our younger selves (though Vaux claims the description above is of his younger self before the age of nine, a feat we may not be able to match). But *how* we buy books may vary significantly from place to place and time to time. There are the places at which we buy books regularly – which usually means frequently – and there are the places at which we buy books only once. The focus here and now is upon regular, patterned, second-hand book-buying in Adelaide.

When I first moved to Adelaide in the late 1980s I already knew something about book-buying here. There were a few good secondhand bookstores, and almost no good shops for buying new books. The best of the secondhand stores was Michael Treloar's two-storey shop out on Payneham Road. Downstairs the books seemed at best only quasi-organised by topic; upstairs you were threatened by high piles of books about which the word 'organised' did not appear to apply at all. Nowadays Michael Treloar's city store is quite well-ordered, and the mantle of disorder appears to have fallen on the ample shoulders of Ted Cavanagh, who runs The Odd Bookshop in Burnside.

I also knew from my occasional visits to Adelaide in earlier years of another source of secondhand books. In those years, and through to the mid-1990s, the public libraries of South Australia were centrally organised and from time to time, once or twice a year, in central Adelaide the State Library would hold a sale of 'excess' books. The sale would last about half a day on a Saturday, and library staff would preside over the disposal of books which no-one had borrowed lately, or of which rather too many copies had been purchased, or which had been read to death. Fiction 20 cents, non-fiction a dollar – the piles of books heaped on trestle tables were rummaged through at high speed by people of all ages.

During the 1990s these sales declined in frequency, and now ex-library books are sold only in small batches at each local library – no mega-sales. I'm puzzled by this, because of my peculiar belief that people who borrow books at a library are less likely to buy books than another class (book-collectors) who probably were the backbone of the buyers of earlier days and who probably don't have time to visit libraries. But I divert from my main thrust, which is book-buying in Adelaide today.

In recent years, aside from the few secondhand stores, there have been a few regular 'sales' which have something in common with the old library sales (the relatively short duration, great piles of cheap books, crowds of buyers). Some of the 'ordinary' secondhand stores pool their resources to rent a hall and try to off-load their secondrate stock, about three times a year. These sales are worth going to only if you believe you are going to be really lucky, since this is the stock which simply can't be sold to these stores' usual customers.

Far more spectacular, though I've missed it for the past few years, is Michael Treloar's Queen's Birthday weekend annual sale which, since the Queen's Birthday in Australia is a moveable feast, I had better identify as occurring in mid-June. From what I have seen of the stock over the years, this seems to consist partly of stuff which is not sufficiently expensive to deserve a place on Michael's (now) high-rent shelves (not even at his second store) and partly of stuff which is so odd-ball that he can't work out a proper price, or a proper market, for it. Although the setting is much the same as the sales mentioned in the previous paragraph, this is a sale not to be missed, since amongst the odd-ball stuff there will invariably be just the treasures you have been looking for for twenty years (except if you are James Hardy Vaux, since you won't yet have been looking for books for twenty years). Where would I be without my copy of *A Century of Municipal Progress 1835-1935*, for example? Or my bound volumes of *The Century Magazine* from the 1890s? For the last few years I have thoughtlessly been out of Australia at the relevant time, and therefore can't report on Mike Treloar's recent sales.

For most of the 1990s, roughly twice a year, Paul de Pasquale ran a book sale bigger than Mike Treloar's, but with stock of slightly lower quality (in terms of rarity – Mike Treloar does not put out in his sales the expensive items Paul does). But Paul de Pasquale's sales are 'different' in a couple of ways. First, he doesn't actually have a shop from which he 'normally' sells – the semi-annual sales are his main public outlet. Second, he has a direct connection with science fiction fandom – in so far as he was a speaker at the 1985 Australian national SF convention (though I have no idea of the topic on which he spoke).

Paul's sales run for three or four days, giving the buyer time for a couple of sorties. It was disappointing to learn, as we did in March, that this sale was to be Paul's last. The effort of staging these extravaganzas was proving too much, and Paul is planning to run sales from his garage, or perhaps from a shopfront. So this one was timed to run with the Writers' Festival. I hope some people attending the festival found out about it, because Paul's sales are always worth going to – even though sometimes I am very disappointed. This time there was no disappointment; usually I find restricting myself to as many books as I can carry is a helpful and prudent limitation – but for once a small trolley would have been helpful.

So, for example, I did pick up Flash Jim's *Memoirs* (1964 edition) for a reasonable \$4, a first English edition of Frigyes Karinthy's *A Journey Round My Skull* (1939) for which I had been on the lookout for some decades, also for \$4. I had to pay \$8 for Stanley Edgar Hyman's 1966 collection of his late wife's fiction and non-fiction, but was happy to do so. But I decided against a few things, one of them a dictionary of American slang (on the grounds of weight). But this brings me back to Flash Jim, for what James Hardy Vaux did, as well as writing the memoirs, was produce the first Australian dictionary.

Vaux's *Vocabulary of the Flash Language* was apparently produced in 1812. Although it followed closely on the expanded edition of Frances Grose's 1785 *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* published in 1811 as *A Dictionary of Buckish Slang, University Wit, and Pickpocket Eloquence*, and Vaux probably borrowed at least the idea from what had gone before, there are plenty of signs of Vaux's originality. In addition, although Vaux was a small-time crook, at least we have documentary evidence of his first-hand experience of "pickpocket eloquence", a conviction – possibly unjust – for pickpocketing being the immediate cause of Vaux's first visit to these austral climes.

In some areas at least Vaux's dictionary, a mixture of the special English used by flash coves in both London and New South Wales, matches our current use more closely, while in others it does not.

Take for example, the word 'kid' used as a verb. The earlier volume gives "To coax or wheedle. To inveigle. To amuse a man or divert his attention while another robs him", but Vaux gives an explanation which seems to me closer to what we know mean in Australia "To kid a person out of any thing, is to obtain it from him by means of a false pretence".

On the other hand, where 'kid' is used as a noun, the expanded Grose gives just "a dapper little fellow. A child" which is close enough to our present usage, while Vaux is more expansive, with "a child of either sex, but particularly applied to a boy who commences thief at an early age; and when by his dexterity he has become famous, he is called by his acquaintances *the kid* so and so, mentioning his name". I.e. Kid Twist Reles, but not The Lemon-drop Kid.

Vaux goes on to add a definition for 'kiddy' (the earlier volume does not include the word except as "young thieves") which is far more detailed ('kiddy' does not appear in Grose, but is extensively used by current Australian intellectuals such as Dame Edna Everage and Rampaging Roy Slaven) but which does not match current usage:

A thief of the lower order, who, when he is breeched, by a course of successful depredation, dresses in the extreme of gentility, and affects a knowingness in his air and conversation, which renders him in reality an object of ridicule; such a one is pronounced by his associates of the same class, a flash-kiddy or a rolling-kiddy. *My kiddy* is a familiar term used by these gentry in addressing each other.

Although it would be useful, I can't see any obvious uses of 'kiddy' like this in US texts, so I suppose 'The Lemon Drop Kiddy' would be quite inappropriate.



Sterling Achievement in Time Travel! (Does Mark Twain know about this?)

From: Stephen Dedman

Sent: Monday, 1 January 1601 11:00 AM

To: eidolist@eidolon.net

Cc: mortlieb@vicnet.net.au; fiawol@netspace.net.au

Subject: Re: [EID] Ditmars: Open letter to Swancon committee

To: Grant Watson

Swancon 25 Committee

Dear Grant,

We, the undersigned, would like to withdraw our works from consideration for the 1999 Ditmar awards for Best Professional Written Work.

We feel, for a variety of reasons, that the selection of works on the ballot does not fairly represent the best science fiction and fantasy written by Australians and professionally published in 1999. When some of the best writers in the field are not represented, and voters can only choose between two novels, two short stories from non-genre publications, and a reprint short fiction collection from a small press, the result lacks any real meaning, and does little credit to our work or to the award.

We further feel that it would be less awkward for us to withdraw our work now than to run the risk of having to publicly decline the award on the night and explain our reasons for doing so.

We would like to make it clear that we are not blaming you or the Swancon committee for this problem; you inherited an unworkable and already discredited system from previous Natcon committees, and other writers have complicated matters in various ways, leaving you, and us, in an unenviable position.

We hope this does not inconvenience the committee; if you would like to suggest alternative ways of handling this, we would be happy to consider them.

Yours sincerely,

Damien Broderick
Stephen Dedman
Dave Luckett

Malaysia: A Complex Culture?

John Foyster

Writing in an introductory way about the culture(s) of Malaysia, which is what I am setting myself to do here, is something guaranteed to oversimplify. Malaysia seems to me a very complicated country, quite difficult and in some ways alien to our understandings, though we probably apply very simple analyses to what we know about the country.

For example I should imagine that, given the events of recent years, readers are more likely to know something about politics in Malaysia than about any other aspect of the country. Yet Malaysia is a country in which politics and culture seem more closely linked than in many other countries.

I will start and end at one particular point in time to illustrate this – although I will not deal at greater length than is necessary, given that a future article will deal with Malaysian politics.

It is possible to regard the modern Malaysian state as having origins in the treaty of Perak (1874) which established a formal relationship between the Sultan of Perak and the British administrators:

“That the Sultan receive and provide a suitable residence for a British Officer, to be called Resident, who shall be accredited to his Court, and whose advice must be asked and acted upon in all questions other than those touching Malay religion and custom.”¹

How simple a world did they live in, who could casually use the words “other than” in this context! When I began an extended period of work in Malaysia in mid-1997 I had already decided, based on three previous visits to the country, that I was deliberately going to avoid learning much Bahasa Malaysia because the complexities of addressing correctly people at different levels of society in Malaysia would be too difficult. (For that matter, in 1999 just to use the words “Bahasa Malaysia” is a political statement, for the government-established Language and Literature Centre opposed Prime Minister Mahathir’s use of “Bahasa Malaysia”, preferring “Bahasa Melayu”; that is, the PM wanted to refer to the language of Malaysia, the country, while the LLC believes one should refer to the language of the Malays, i.e. the roughly 60% of the population who might claim to be “ethnic Malays”. This is quite a turnabout from a decade earlier, when the PM was promoting “Bahasa Baku”, i.e. “the real/genuine language”, which essentially meant Bahasa Malaysia as pronounced in the PM’s home state.²)

I do actually want to write about contemporary Malaysian culture here (leaving contemporary politics to a later item, but forewarning that things are a little more complicated than is reported in the “Western Press”), but that will mean giving some historical background, if only to indicate how complex such an idea is.

When your plane lands at the new Kuala Lumpur airport at Sepang, it isn’t immediately obvious – it isn’t obvious at all - that the airport is at the boundary between two of the Malaysian states, Selangor (the Federal territory of Kuala Lumpur lies wholly within Selangor) and Negeri Sembilan (“Nine States”, although identifying the nine states from which Negeri Sembilan gets its name is difficult, since one of them seems to have been Klang, which is now a part of Selangor – but I digress...).

One way in which Negeri Sembilan is interesting is that, according to C. Northcote Parkinson (yes, the very same...) the people of Negeri Sembilan “were not really Malays at all”. Be that as it may,

¹ A retranslation of what the Malays were told this section of the Treaty meant is said to read: “The Sultan should accept and build a suitable residence for one officer who is under the British Government whose title shall be British Resident of Perak State. The Sultan of Perak shall have to consult with him on all matters and the working of Perak State except that he cannot interfere with Muslim religious affairs and Malay customs.” No prize for spotting the difference.

² Confession time: my bilingual dictionary is Inggeris-Melayu/Melayu-Inggeris

Minangkabau culture (which is derived from Sumatran origins and is now concentrated in Negeri Sembilan) is an important part of Malaysian culture (the National Museum in Kuala Lumpur is built in Minangkabau style), and customary law in Negeri Sembilan is distinguished by the fact that it is matrilineal. In a world which is largely patrilineal, such a difference is itself interesting, but there's more to it than that. "Real" inherited property (land, buildings etc.) passes to the daughter, but "personal" inherited property (jewellery, weapons) passes to the son. Then there's acquired property (i.e. not inherited), which may have been acquired before or after marriage, and which is divided after the death of one party in different ways depending on whether wife or husband dies first. To take a simple example, should the wife die, her acquired property passes directly to her daughter, but should the husband die first his acquired property passes to the surviving wife to be shared amongst the daughters.

This is the simple version, which existed before the arrival of Islam. Now add the essentially patriarchal elements of Islam, and you can see that an outsider like me might find things a touch complicated.

Well, of course, this digression has been about just one region of Malaysia. It happens to be an important influence on Malaysia, which is why I've given it some attention, but probably the most attractive introduction to the culture of Malaysia, through its history to around 1400, is Sabri Zain's web pages at

<http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Flats/3795>.

Unfortunately these beautiful pages, though designed to cover Malaysia's history comprehensively, at present only reach as far as the arrival of the Europeans in around 1500; Sabri Zain tells me he has (surprise!) been caught up in other events in Malaysia, but he hopes to get back to the web pages soon.

I'll therefore just give a couple of bridging sentences to cover the last 500 years of history, to illustrate some influences on culture. The Portuguese arrived, in a colonial fashion, around the time that Europeans arrived in the Americas. (But the Malay peninsula was known to Europeans long before this, appearing on one of Ptolemy's maps as "Auraca Chersonesus" – The Golden Chersonese.) Just as waves of migrants had swept down through the peninsula and on to Indonesia, Papua/New Guinea, and on to Australia and Tasmania tens of thousands of years ago, migrations of Chinese continued more or less in parallel with the European migrations. But the notion of "Malaya", or "Malaysia" is a relatively recent idea. The Dutch, who followed the Portuguese in being the dominant European nation in the region about 150 years later, exercised the same policy – wanting only to establish trading relations with existing political entities (and of course encouraging friendly ones). At the time of arrival of the European traders, kingdoms in the region continued the earlier pattern of being rather small, but not necessarily confined to one island (just as Malaysia is unusual, now, in having western and eastern branches on different land masses).

Then the English took over the "dominant European nation" role at around the time of the Napoleonic Wars. (Thus in a city like Malacca, more or less continually under European domination from 1500 until independence in 1957, one finds people with *very* mixed ancestry.) But nothing much happened by way of development until the 1860s. And then the American Civil War played a key role in a series of events which led ultimately to the formation of Malaysia. This was the first occasion on which there was a large use of canned food – and hence a corresponding increase in the demand for, and price of, tin. And the largest deposits of tin in the world were to be found in the Malay peninsula, and in the region of Perak in particular. More Chinese migrated to work the tin mines. Then at the end of the 1860s the Suez Canal opened, improving European access to the peninsula. English interest in an "organised" political system in the peninsula increased, and a series of treaties like the treaty of Perak were signed over the next fifty or so years. As rubber became increasingly important there were more migrations. Indians, especially from the south of India, were added to the mix of labourers.

So by the time of independence in 1957 the Malay peninsula had large numbers of "ethnic" Chinese and Indians. A key element of Malaysian culture is this mixture of "Malay", Chinese, and Indian cultures, overlaid with English as the "common" language. As a result, most Malaysians are fluent in at least two languages. (For example Thanu, mentioned at length in the earlier episode, is fluent in Tamil, English, and Malay – in about that order of fluency – and is absolutely comfortable in any of the languages.)

Modern Malaysia – that is to say, the Malaysia which tries to be a technologically advanced nation – tries to sustain all of these cultures. As a result there are religious observations and cultural festivals everywhere you turn. It is important to note the close links between religion and culture so that, for example, being a Tamil *means* being a Hindu (though there are of course exceptions) – just as in the west, even in countries in which there is supposedly a separation of church and state, there are firm links: in the US, for example, a presidential candidate is by definition a Christian. In the case of Malaysia, this is where the treaty of Perak comes unstuck (in my view). For example, in discussing political power in Malaysia with a visiting Chinese from Australia I referred to the importance of the political power of the sultans. “Oh,” she said, “they only have power in religious matters”. This is an inheritance from the treaty of Perak, of course. But since I don’t see much separation of church and state I have no problem in assigning rather more power to the sultans (though it is somewhat less than absolute power, of course). But the links between church and state are matters I will take up in a later article.

So what then is “culture” in Malaysia today, in the Western sense? Pop culture there is much the same as elsewhere, though in addition to all the Western pop stars there are the locals: check this out by searching the WWWeb for sites dedicated to Siti Nurhaliza! (I actually think she is quite a performer, with a vocal range matching Western classical singers – and she is only just in her twenties.) Local singers may sing in Western pop tradition, or maybe with a little Chinese influence (and if you find yourself in the right place, as I did in 1989, at the E & O Hotel in Georgetown, you can listen – or you could then – to Albert Yeoh and his Trio, where the “girl singer” was probably Mrs. Yeoh and they’ve been performing the same numbers since Somerset Maugham used to stay at the E & O).

When it comes to movies, Western movies dominate the local screens, although there are also plenty of Hong Kong action movies as well. There are not too many movies made in Malaysia nowadays, and when they are it is more a matter of using the locale (e.g. ENTRAPMENT, or the recent remake of ANNA AND THE KING OF SIAM). But just before and after Independence there was a substantial local industry (mainly films produced by Run Run Shaw from Hong Kong). This was mainly due to the efforts of one man - Tan Sri P. Ramlee (yes, there are a couple of web sites devoted to him). P. Ramlee appeared in 63 movies between 1948 and 1972. I’ve only seen a handful of them (though I have copies of about ten) and the simplest way to describe him is as a sort of combination of Martin and Lewis. His comic roles tended to be those of the helpless fool, while his pop singing probably was the bread-and-butter of his existence (also an instrumentalist, his songs are still recorded today, long after his death in 1973). I am probably one of the few Westerners to really like his films: that’s certainly the impression I got in conversation with a video dealer in Shah Alam back in October 1999.

Westerners have of course written fiction set in Malaya. Somerset Maugham tells some neat yarns. But Anthony Burgess’s MALAYAN TRILOGY is not admired in literary circles in Malaysia. I remember discussing this, after the poetry reading at Silverfish Books (mentioned briefly in the first issue), with the Singaporean poet Robert Yeo and the Malaysian novelist Chuah Guat Eng. What puzzled me was that though I am an enthusiastic reader of Burgess’s work I could never get into the MALAYAN TRILOGY. After listening to Robert and Guat Eng I suspect that Burgess felt, in these early novels, that he had to appeal to his presumed English audience by mocking the Malays. The result is a distinct lack of humility (as it were), quite uncharacteristic of Burgess’s later works. So if you want to read some fiction about Malaya I’d recommend Maugham rather than Burgess. That’s okay if you want to explore the peninsula in the comfort of your own home.

But what aspects of Malaysian culture does the tourist come across without making much effort? I suppose there’s the newspaper shoved under the door of your hotel room, what you can follow on television, and perhaps what you see in the street.

Almost certainly the newspaper will be *The New Straits Times*. The *NST* (a broadsheet) is usually categorised in the western press as “following the government line” or something similar. Given that it is owned (or was, the last time I looked) by the major party in the ruling coalition this is scarcely surprising: I don’t recall the last time a Murdoch paper advocated a line antipathetic to Murdoch’s interest, for that matter.

There are three other English-language papers in peninsular Malaysia which one might discover. *The Malay Mail*, although it is the oldest continuous paper, is now just an afternoon tabloid put out by the

same people who produce the *NST*. *The Star* is a tabloid which is the preferred-reading of many public servants. Owned by Chinese interests, it usually includes full reports which the *NST* publishes only in extract. *The Sun* is like *the Malay Mail* in terms of the usefulness of the information in it, though it does have interesting stuff from time to time. And then there are the newspapers in Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese, Tamil – but the English-speaking tourist is unlikely to read them. One Bahasa Malaysia newspaper does have an English supplement – *Harakah*, the newspaper of the main opposition (Islamist) party. Although the license for the paper restricts its circulation to party members, this is a restriction much breached. For example, in late 1998 when the government firmly reminded the editors of *Harakah* that it was meant to be a party newspaper, with circulation restricted to members, I was delighted to see that the *Harakah*-sellers moved their stand from a few yards from the entrance to the prime minister's offices to directly in front of the entrance. The *NST*, *The Star*, and *Harakah* all have web editions which convey something of their tone (but only something).

This avalanche of English-language newspapers is in part due to history, in turn producing a country in which English is the “common” but not official language (in shopping malls in the major cities, the announcements asking a patron to move a car are made in English). On top of that, these papers serve a large conurbation – the Klang Valley – with a population of over 3 million. The quality of some aspects of the two leading newspapers was much higher, for example, than newspapers in Adelaide.

Twice a week, for example, the *NST* has a computer supplement – *Computimes* – which runs to around 48 tabloid pages, and presents a wide range of information, ranging from technical to home use. The weekly computer supplement in *The Star* – *In Tech* – isn't too bad either. To use a different measure of quality, each week the *NST* devotes about half a broadsheet page to reviews of classical music by Edward Dorall, an amount of space no Australian newspaper gives to such recordings, and Christy Yoong has a similar column in *The Star*. (It's probably unnecessary to add that there is substantial coverage of pop music.) Classical music concerts (see also below) also get extensive coverage.

On Wednesdays the *NST* carries a doublepage broadsheet spread titled “Literary & Books”. It's edited by Kee Thuan Chye, who took the photos of the poetry reading which appeared in the first eFNAC. It's a quite lively segment: for example, in the October 13 1999 edition, which announced the afore-mentioned poetry reading, there's an extended piece by Amir Muhammad on “Bahasa Malaysia vs. Bahasa Melayu”, another column devoted to William Empson, some local literary notes, a review of *Blues for Dummies* and, buried in a tiny corner, a puff headlined “Book full of praise for PM launched”. Hm. Amir, however, is now a “former” columnist for the *NST*, having been a bad boy just a month later. He submitted a column on bookstores in Malaysia, complaining that there's wasn't much variety. Unfortunately, while we think of politicians as being slow on the uptake, this isn't always quite as overwhelming a characteristic as we might like, and even before the column got to print the senior management at the *NST* pulled it on the grounds that the column didn't actually seem to be about bookstores at all, but about another area in Malaysian life in which there wasn't much variety. There was quite a kerfuffle in Malaysian literary circles, but Amir is very resourceful: you can read his “new” columns at www.egroups.com/group/amir-muhammad. The offending article appears there, titled “the Need for Alternatives”.

In fact, the WWW is, for those who want to catch up on things Malaysian, a handy starting point: www.kulture.com.my gives good coverage of contemporary cultural life in Kuala Lumpur, for example. A good collection of more general information is to be found at (or from) www.malaysiakini.com

But back to what the tourist is likely to find. The TV set in the hotel room will be connected to one of the two local cable networks (most commonly ASTRO), as well as to the free-to-air channels. Amongst the cable channels there are only a few devoted to Asian/Malaysian programming. On the free-to-air channels it's a different story. There are three government-owned channels (TV1, TV2, and TV3), and two others (Metrovision and NTV7).

TV1 is very traditional Malay in orientation. This is where from time to time you see the international Koran-reading competition in prime time. TV2 is a bit more sporty – and has a lively “current affairs” show on Sunday nights. TV3 is the “popular” channel. Between them the three government channels do provide a wide range of programs, with Malay, Chinese and Indian sitcoms getting substantial time during the day, and imported (subtitled) programs later in the day. On Saturday afternoons, for example, there is usually an Indian-movie doublebill on one of the channels. At night

TV2 carries two news services in English (one covering local news, the other world news). The local news service on TV2 usually has two or three main items and then filler. During the trials of Anwar Ibrahim, there was usually only one main item! It's an interesting example of how countries like Malaysia are perceived that when I was in Malaysia during the trials Australians felt obliged to try to keep me "up to date" in the belief that I wasn't hearing or seeing anything in Malaysia. If only! Unfortunately it was "Anwar 'round the clock" time. (with extended coverage in the newspapers as well).

Metrovision and NTV7 are privately-owned, with NTV7 focussing on Chinese programming and Metrovision mostly running US and UK programs. Metrovision took a holiday late last year, but seems to be back and running in early 2000. News is not a significant item on either of the privately-owned channels.

The visitor who sees any life on the street will probably do so mainly from a taxi; it is really too hot to do much walking around in Malaysia, though walking in the early evening can be very pleasant and very safe. Visitors will be more likely to go to western-style restaurants (or eat in their hotels, which is almost the same thing) than to "local" restaurants (whatever that means). Possibly a visitor will take a tour which ends up in a restaurant. If you do that in Kuala Lumpur, and the restaurant is Seri Malaysia, then you will do quite well, since there you will be able to pick from a smorgasbord of many different Malaysian styles of cooking. (Last time I went there they were offering durian soup, less of an acquired taste than fresh durian.) At Seri Malaysia each evening there is also a "cultural performance" which, it has to be admitted, is somewhat on the ersatz side.

Cities like Kuala Lumpur and Georgetown are, however, not characteristic of Malaysia; they have a heavy concentration of Malaysians of Chinese background, so if you walk around in these cities you will not be seeing "the real Malaysia". Just where you would see "the real Malaysia" depends on your vision of the country, but for many it is the northern states such as Kedah and Kelantan. By the way, as a linguistic aside, the "e" in the names of those states is almost inaudible (e.g. "K'dah" is a better guide to pronunciation). When written Malay was being developed, an apparent principle was that syllables couldn't in general have successive consonants, and as a result a very slight schwa is introduced into many syllables (at the airport the welcoming sign says "Selamat Datang", but it's "Slamat Datang" to the ear).

Because the big cities are not typical, there will be some false impressions for the perambulating visitor. Wherever you are, however, it is hard to miss the startling colour sense of Malaysian women. Savvy young women make very glamorous use of the scarf in association with the remainder of their clothes. (For those wanting a different appreciation of Malay dress, James Kirkup's *Tropic Temper* from the early 1960s tends to focus on the dress, or lack of it, of his young male Malay companions, their golden loins, etc. etc....)

As is usually the case in books on travel to Muslim countries, tourists are advised to dress modestly, something most of them do. But the visitors are likely to be surprised by costumes worn in the large cities by young Chinese women, where the most common fashion is for skirts differing in vertical length by only a millimetre or two from a belt. But only the locals know how to get away with this.

One restaurant often mentioned in guidebooks for Kuala Lumpur as a "must visit" (at least for atmosphere) is the Colosseum. Down near the river Gombak, almost opposite the Globe Silk Store (a place well worth visiting), the Colosseum looks as though it has been around for a century – and hasn't had much maintenance done in that time. But they serve a good steak, which is why notables from Somerset Maugham to the modern Malay cartoonist Lat have found it a convenient base. During the demonstrations which arose in association with Anwar's trials, some of my fellow consultants (who were staying in the vicinity) found that it also served as a refuge when demonstrations became a little "lively". Both police and waiters encouraged them to stay indoors, and so there they had to sit, drinking Tiger beer, for hours on end, interrupted only occasionally by a waiter assuring them that it was not yet safe to go outside – but always expressing his willingness to take orders for another round of drinks.

Lat is someone whose work the visitor to Malaysia is likely to become familiar with. Most newsstands in hotels have copies of collections of his cartoons. The most common will probably be his autobiographical works, of which *Kampung Boy*, about his life as a child near Ipoh, is probably the best.

Here's a sample of his work, done when Jodie Foster arrived in Malaysia to work on *Anna and the King of Siam* during an outbreak of Japanese Encephalitis.



You'll notice that I have resisted the very large temptation to fiddle with the original...

But the visitor probably won't get far beyond that, in terms of local culture (except of course for buying airport gifts – for which the airport is not, by the way, advised).

But after a while in Malaysia one uncovers a few more aspects of the culture – aspects accessible to the visitor if only they can be discovered.

For example, it isn't only Hollywood, Bollywood, and Hong Kong that generate the movies you can see in Kuala Lumpur (though it

probably is outside the capital). The Filmnet Café has regular seasons of European films (usually two sessions a day), and a new cinema megaplex near the centre of the city has a few screens dedicated to foreign films: in late April/early May, for example, they are showing a season of Iranian films.

Then there's music. In addition to the regular round of pop concerts, since 1998 Kuala Lumpur has had a spectacular 800-seat concert hall which is home to the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra. The concert hall is slung between the Petronas Twin Towers and, like the orchestra itself, has been heavily subsidised by oil revenues. The orchestra was recruited from all over the world, and their first few concerts (late 1998) were appropriately modest as they learned to work together. But by the end of 1999 they sounded very good indeed, had formed some chamber groups, and had constructed an outreach program to spread the message of classical western music. (But I should point out that at the opening concert one of the pieces performed was by a Malaysian composer; it was a shade on the traditional side.)

The MPO, which has its own website, is not the only classical music orchestra in the Kuala Lumpur region, but there are not any outside the Klang Valley (so far as I know). Mostly when I went to hear the MPO it was with other western consultants, but late in 1999 I went there with Thana and her daughter Kavi. We managed to pick the wrong concert to go to (Kavi is learning the violin and the concert was mainly Dame Gillian Weir on the new organ), but we managed to get fairly good seats. There was an interesting clash of cultures just after we left the concert. The Twin Towers face onto Jalan Ampang, one of the main thoroughfares in Kuala Lumpur, and we had to cross this to get to Thana's car. Just as we crossed the road there was an enormous blast of sound ahead of us which after a few seconds resolved into someone on a megaphone – at a great distance, a little beyond the Klang river. Thana was puzzled as to what it was (but she hasn't lived in this particular locality, whereas I had). "Ah" I said, "that's across in Kampung Baru, and it's demonstrators in support of Anwar". The loudspeakers were at least a kilometre away, and the volume was far in excess of that which would be allowed in Australia (and probably most other countries I have ever visited). The police made no attempt to close it down while we were in the vicinity, emphasising different cultural understandings in the meaning of "freedom of speech", since the 100,000 or so people within earshot had no alternative!

I was lucky, in October, to be invited by some of the Chinese women in the KL office of the organisation I worked for to go to a play. It was the first time I had an extended period (almost ten weeks) in the Kuala Lumpur area without any fellow Australians to talk to, and they obviously decided I needed cheering up. They didn't tell me too much about it, except that it was written in Singapore, and that it was at the Actor's Studio Theatre.

Finding the theatre itself was an adventure – I could see the location on maps, but couldn't remember any building that looked like a theatre. It was underground – below the main parade ground in Kuala Lumpur, opposite the courts.



Emily of Emerald Hill is not a new play – it's about fifteen years old – but the performance was. Director Krishen Jit is one of Malaysia's leading directors, and he put a new spin on what is basically an autobiographical monologue by a Straits Chinese woman born near

the beginning of this century, covering the whole of her life up until the 1970s.

The new spin was to have Emily played by a man – the Singaporean actor Ivan Heng. One argument was that a Chinese woman of that period would never have seen a woman acting on a stage, an interesting though not wholly convincing case which nevertheless allowed Heng (who has played female roles on stage before, anyway) an opportunity for a tour de force. It certainly was. A monologue running two and a half hours is demanding theatre anyway, no matter how many on-stage costume changes you do, but on top of that Heng used the interval for some spontaneous interaction with the audience. Here's one shot from the performance.

Almost all of the performance was in English, which is just as well because while I can follow straightforward declaratory Bahasa Malaysia when I know what the subject is, an artistic performance would be totally beyond me.

However, one delightful thing in the performance was the use of the full range of “peninsular English”, which has almost the full range of inflection and tone of Chinese, and a good deal of imagination as well. English, whether mid-Atlantic or ANZAC, is pretty boring when you've heard an accomplished speaker of Manglish or Singlish!

This performance got me right in, so when the ladies invited me to come back a fortnight or so later to a comedy evening at The Actor's Studio I rapidly agreed. The two comedians were very good, but traded on the universal standards of comedy – sex, politics, and race (in the Malaysian context). They were pretty good in all three areas: unfortunately I'm not sure about the sketch I most liked. This was the finale, and the introduction suggested it was based upon a real-life situation, in which in a northern states radio talkback program the announcer interviewed the director of a new state department, of sexology, intended to help couples with “difficulties”. They take a call from a young woman who begins to describe her problems – and pretty soon we have a phone-sex situation.

When I return to Kuala Lumpur the Actor's Studio will be high on my list of places to re-visit.

Visitors probably don't expect to have the literature of a country thrust upon them, but that's what happened to travellers on Malaysian Airlines in February 1999 who discovered that about sixty pages of their in-flight magazine was devoted to “The Write Stuff” – short extracts and illustrations from the full range of Malaysian writing (well, almost). Some of the photos are marvellous, and although the prose extracts are short they do introduce the reader to a range of thinking about the country.

The trouble is, this is one aspect of Malaysian culture which is extremely complicated. For example, the biggest literary event of the past few years is the publication of Shahnnon Ahmed's SHIT, a novel of political life in Malaysia. As the title indicates, he is not an admirer of the present ruling party. I'm glad to say that the novel is presently being translated into English, and I look forward to reading it.

But I don't have time to cover literature in Malaysia – not even the science fiction, of which there is very little since most technically-oriented people read English anyway – but it is time for me to hastily return to the beginning, and the treaty of Perak.

Shortly after the treaty of Perak was signed, the British resident of Perak, J W Birch, was murdered (1 November 1875). Kee Thuan Chye, the literary editor of the *NST*, a few years ago wrote a short play, *We Could **** You, Mr Birch*, and I was smart enough (or lucky enough) to buy a copy at Silverfish Books. In his introduction Robert Yeo remarks that Kee “melts with unerring skill narratives, genres, themes, time in ways that fuse them, set them in opposition or openly subvert them”. He's right: it's a great play, and the few Australians I've loaned my copy to agree. If ever it comes your way, see it. Kee Thuan Chye is also an actor – he appears as a judge in *Anna and the King of Siam* for example. He's the kind of writer whose works you want to go back to again and again which is, as you will have guessed, also a description of my feelings about Malaysia, my second home.



Some Comments on FREECON

Bob Smith

Sorry, John, you can't have a complete conrep, because I left early on the Saturday and didn't go in on the Sunday. Which, I guess, gives some indication of my lack of enthusiasm for this first FREECON. I am enclosing the programme, etc., which most of us were given at Registration along with our badge. The Registration was carried out on the steps of the Museum, so I guess we could slightly mangle Eisenstein and say this was the Museum Steps Sequence...

A reasonable amount of dithering about prior to the Opening Ceremony, which began on time, with Garry Dalrymple giving a brief outline of FREECON's aims and an even briefer history of Science Fiction. Not a large audience at this stage, with the odd drifter in. At this stage no names I knew, although some were interested in chatting about mutual interest in the genre. Kevin Dillon and Ron Clarke arrived a little later. Old-timers Clarke and Smith nodded gravely at each other across the room, and I think Kevin was already falling asleep. Ron and I were to be part of the panel on "SF&F The Convention, DUFF and Stuff".

Actually, whilst walking through Hyde Park to the Museum on that pleasant Sydney Autumn morning I had reflected on the panel titles, which should have been a warning to this greybeard that it might not be quite my fannish cup of tea...Way back in the past some fan in some fanzine had described a sf convention as being three conventions: one for the fans, one for the pro's, and one for the readers. (Almost immediately came the "Fourth Convention" which included the convention committee who worked hard but hopefully also enjoyed themselves.) This was some four years before the Star Trek pilot was screened at the Cleveland Convention, and around two years before the first Dr Who episode hit the TV screens in England. To the audience of this first FREECON, if they'd come for the panels, that definition of sf convention would be incredibly outdated.

In the hall we were settling down as the lights dimmed and Dr Walter Boles gave a reasonably interesting lecture on some of the nastier beasts that roamed early Australia, leading up to the work on DNA cloning using the remains of extinct species. A relatively current popular topic.

We all trotted down to the steps again for group photos, with much jostling to get everybody in, and some interesting dexterity from David Bofinger and his camera. Then there was a fairly rapid dispersal for Lunch, with said steps coming in handy again.

As I sat on the steps eating my sandwich I was beginning to get a distinct feeling that in truth I belonged with the other museum dinosaurs. Those who wanted to chat, in the spirit of this convention, revealed moments of perplexity for me. One young lady had never heard of Heinlein but liked watching "Stargate." Well, I thought, that's fair enough; I had never heard of Orson Scott Card until I looked him up in my Clute. Another quiet person seemed to spend most of his time collecting, but appeared slightly in awe at my mention of old runs of *Astounding*. His enthusiasm for buying on the Web was obvious.

Ron and I and three or four others were up next, but by this time I noticed the Museum was in full swing, and the noise level was increasing. The panel was a little late starting so we were asked to limit our individual talks to five minutes. It was a reasonable size audience, and Garry invited me to begin...

I went back in time to the early worldcons we supported and the detailed proceedings we had that were still worth re-reading, to Syncon'70 and how the small convention was great fun. How it sparked my enthusiasm sufficiently that I attended the Melbourne University SF Convention in 1971, also great fun as a small convention. My enthusiasm having now gotten out of control I foolishly bid for Syncon'72, and landed the job of Chairman. No more small, comfortable convention for us Sydney-siders! Influenced by the US conventions we opted for the first hotel SF convention, and the first DUFF winner. Although, to the best of my memory, Syncon'72 went over well, with a good attendance and reasonable programmes for the time, it traumatised me to the extent I began sliding out of Fandom into Gafia. (There were other factors, as Lyn has pointed out: we were in the process of moving homes, we were commuting to the City to work, Lyn's father had

died recently, etc.) I saw FREECON as a return to the small, inexpensive, unadorned convention I remembered, perhaps gathering in the fragments of Sydney SF Fandom.

Ron Clarke spoke briefly on the basics of DUFF, and I'm not sure how much enlightenment I saw in the audiences' faces. (I have to admit in all honesty that by this time I was having doubts about these peoples' relationship to the Fandom I knew) The gentleman on my left - one Peter Eisler, I think - spoke about SF Games and their groups. The next person - and it's unforgivable I can't remember names! - spoke on Adelaide fans and conventions. Edwina Harvey spoke next on the small gatherings she organises, and mention was made of Harlan Ellison's visit. Then an extremely garrulous gentleman from Canberra described their activities. Garry was about to declare the panel finished when Ted Scribner's hand shot up and he reminded Garry he had been allowed to say a few words on his experiencing his first Swancon. It obviously had impressed him, and I had read elsewhere how well organised the Swancons were, and other certain cities might take note. There being no questions from the audience we were allowed to escape.

Ron and I stretched our legs a bit, being the old codgers we are, and as we sat waiting for the Author Readings I glanced at Sunday's programme, and wondered (aloud) what the hell was meant by "ancient" science fiction." With a perfectly straight face Ron said it probably meant pre-Star Wars. I found this almost frightening, but consoled myself with the fact I'd heard someone mention "Starship Troopers" followed by the obligatory sniggering and rumbling so perhaps all was not lost. (This only goes to show how naive one can be when one returns from Gafialand)

A gentleman read from his latest fantasy novel, and it was entertaining because of the convincing noises he made. Next was a young lady - whose name I missed - who spoke too softly to overcome the noise level, but it appeared to be the kind of fantasy I rarely read. Kate Orman then read a short tale that was thoughtfully funny (and at least was sf), and her husband, who writes Dr Who stories gave us a sample that - perhaps, once again, because of the noise level - I only partially understood. And that's bad if you can't understand a Dr Who story. There appeared to be a cryptic message in there that some of the enlightened ones appreciated, and I thought "Ghod! Smith you don't even know who the latest Dr Who is..."(Had to be Colin Baker, I guess, because his picture was stuck on the wall)

Bit of a break here, whilst some shifting around took place, and the nicely-dressed academics arrived to speak on the new NSW HSC English Syllabus and the science fiction content therein. The two lady speakers were extremely hard to hear because of the noise level, and by this time a member of the committee should have been on duty at the rear door to keep it shut! I noticed that Dr Anne Cranney-Francis kept referring to "Blade Runner" but didn't seem to mention Dick at all, and that her students thought science fiction was "rubbish." I think what it boils down to is if you don't give the student the comfortable movie version of a science fiction novel to back up his reading requirement then in this hyped-up media age said student is floundering. "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" got lots of mention, in its various forms. Kevin Dillon, who apparently is wide awake even when his eyes are closed, threw a spanner in the works by mentioning "Fahrenheit 451" but I guess the academics know when to be diplomatic. Clinical examination of our favourite science fiction makes me shiver.

Slight break again whilst Michael Kennedy set up the slide projector for his "Lord of the Rings" movie update, and Ron Clarke took off at this stage. It's been twenty-eight years since we last met, and Ghu knows when next... A fair number drifted out, leaving what was apparently the hard-core Tolkien people clustered closer to the screen. The commentator backed up his slides with some commentary, his voice was clear and the slides in focus. There were a few titbits of information regarding the movie I wasn't aware of. (stretch the romance between Aragon and Arwen, for example), although I had read the tentative cast list in *Thyme*, I think. David Bofinger in the audience had some additional words on the director. (I wondered how many there were aware of the meeting between Tolkien and Forry Ackerman back in 1957 for a proposed animated version of The Lord of the Ring, and I couldn't imagine two individuals more poles apart!)

It was at this stage I decided to leave. There were genuine and sincere individuals there who wanted to communicate with fellow enthusiasts, whatever their personal favourite aspect of the genre, but I felt there were also individuals there still wrapped in their own sf microcosm. The jibes,

kibbitzing and in-jokes fell reasonably thick and fast. So...was it just me? Was I a relic of Science Fiction Fandom Past, with the only anchors being Dillon and Clarke? There were certainly panels there of interest to the neo, but I couldn't work up much enthusiasm for what I heard or was to come. Sunday may have been slightly more "fannish" but I felt I'd be more at home at home, because Lyn and I often have our own two-person convention, where many aspects of science fiction, fantasy and fandom are discussed. So, maybe I am The Hermit of Bradbury.

I sincerely believe the idea of FREECON has merit, and subsequent gatherings should prove beneficial for all who can relax in the worlds of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Fandom, as they exist now. As Lyn bluntly put it: "You'd better stick to letter-hacking..."

Below: Paul Stevens, Bob Smith, Lee Harding at the 1970 SYNCON. Below the photo (probably taken by JF) is the introduction to the idea of a FREECON, from the FREECON 00 programme.



WHAT IS A FREECON?

A Freecon is intended to be a meeting to draw SF&F readers into organised Science Fiction and Fantasy activities, by keeping the admission cost of meetings low and the program eclectic, readers and viewers of SF&F who do not 'identify' as 'fans' will be encouraged to have a taste of what fandom in its many forms has to offer. The Freecon conventions are also an attempt to address several gaps in the life experience of people who read or watch SF&F. Young people are required to set aside their Non-HSC interests. University age people have to set aside their campus social interactions on graduation in order to devote full effort to establishing a career and then young family commitments.

Attending a Freecon once a year is less of a commitment than attending monthly meetings and a way of maintaining social contacts which are non-family/work related. Freecons as a more local 'Regional' event may attract people whose interest would not justify the cost of a 'weekend away' convention (accommodation) at a 'statewide' convention.

If we get to do Freecons as joint ventures with University/College SF&F groups, they could serve to introduce pre-tertiary students to campus groups as well as allowing 'about to' graduates a link to a post-campus expression of their interest in SF&F.

This first Freecon started as an initiative by several members of the Sydney Futurians, a Science Fiction group which has met in different forms to discuss SF since 1938. They were concerned that while there were many single theme (TV series and Movie-based) SF&F clubs and meetings in the Sydney area, there were few opportunities for people, whose interests in SF&F crossed several fields, to meet and discuss common interests.

AT THE CORNER OF GEEK & NERD...

roman <roman@ncver.edu.au>

I shall zap you some comments shortly as regards content, but I thought some notes on the `_form_` of your fanzine might be useful...

You've obviously made the decision to go with PDF rather than html, presumably for greater control over appearance*. I'd suggest that html + Cascading Style sheets would give a similar level of control, at far lower cost (spacewise), but I freely admit the use of CSS-aware browsers is still too low to guarantee appearance.

However, having apparently committed to an electronic form (rather than print), eFNAC1 makes little if no use of the advantages of that form. Sure, you've got the beauty of full-colour, but there are no hyperlinks.

Not even the contents page is hyperlinked to the first screen of articles! PDF allows internal hyperlinks, as well as outline headings for a navigation panel on the left of the screen. Did you actively reject this (panel) option, or are you still experimenting with Acrobat?*

Despite the generous margins, the block of body text seems crowded on screen. Could you increase the leading, or use a font with more white space when set solid? Why the generous margin at the bottom of each screen? Or do you expect readers to print out the fanzine (as I have) and have allowed for a hand grip at the bottom margin?***

In the Closing Thoughts, you have a couple of what appear to be hyperlinks which don't work -- was this an oversight, or an accident of formatting? If you're going to have an electronic 'zine, it should respect the conventions, surely?****

Come on John, 'fess up, this is really a print zine in e-drag, isn't it? The unnecessary continuation of "how to read a page" (screen 2) — a natural for an internal hyperlink, surely? — suggests you're taking the piss again.*****

If you're designing for the screen, I must admit I found the two column format annoying (perhaps because the columns were so short due to the large typeface) — I'd rather a narrower single column, with links/sidebars for asides & comments (something like feedbag) or even thumbnails.

The problem of designing for both electronic & print is a tricky one; my solution would be to use different media stylesheets, so that printed output would adjust font size, etc. Unfortunately, this is very difficult to do (ie I haven't managed it yet!). I still think the *af* solution is optimal***** (even if the envisaged distribution via floppy didn't take off), but I'll be turning to PDF versions of *doxa!* for electronic distribution (not onscreen browsing!).

The ideal combination of web/pdf/print is still a long way off, although PLOTKA seems to have done a nice job so far.

* Yes, at least in part.

** I rejected the option for reasons which have since emerged.

*** This is where I **was** having trouble, since I was using PDFWriter and the juggling of margins in the two programs wasn't going well. Things are now somewhat improved.

**** It seemed to me that it was okay to use colour **without** requiring the use of a hyperlink.

***** Bingo! As we have seen, most recipients print the 'zine out (as I suspected would be the case) hence the need to prepare for that possibility (which answers at least some of your doubts)

***** But so far, 'optimal' has meant producing just one issue — otherwise I could make unkind remarks about the infrequency of fanzines produced in this 'optimal' way.

- jf

Evelyn Leeper <evelyn.leeper@excite.com>

I too print and read eFNAC off-line. I sit in front of a screen all day, so getting away from it is a good thing. Also, I can read paper copies while I'm walking to meetings, lunch, etc. (The building where I work is 0.4 kilometers from one end to the other.)

So it's true — fans **can** read and walk at the same time!

- jf

Letters

Lloyd&Yvonne Penney <penneys@netcom.ca>

Dear John:

I have fallen behind a little bit, but I now have issues 1 and 2 of **eFNAC**. I know you didn't format them to be printed out, but that didn't stop me from doing so. I have a stack of about 100 sheets here in front of me, so I'd better do something with them, like write a letter of comment.

eFNAC #1

I hadn't heard of Allan Bray, but such a collection of fanzines and photos should be preserved and perhaps given to a library for saving, or for the ready access of Australian fandom, scanned and placed onto a website, perhaps the same way Joe Siclari has done with www.fanac.org.

For someone living where I am, Australia is far away, but when it comes to standards of living, it's just like here. Malaysia is another option altogether. It's also far away, but its standard of living is a great unknown, which makes it exotic, but leaves you a little wary about the idea of visiting it. After seeing references to ATMs, Tower Records, department stores and the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, a clearer picture of Kuala Lumpur is coming into view for me. At the beginning of that essay, you don't explain to newer readers like me why you went to Malaysia in the first place...employment presumably, but what kind? A workshop?

Your significant other is named Yvonne? Is that Yvonne Rousseau? My S.O. is Yvonne as well. I keep finding more and more Yvonnas in fandom, like Yvonne Rowse in Britain.

The Malaysian government's attack on Anwar Ibrahim...the sodomy charge is gone, but what else are they attempting to stick on Ibrahim, seeing he continues to be a thorn in their side? The Murray Hiebert case I remember to some extent, but not too much. It got some newspaper coverage, but was quickly relegated to the back pages.

(As I read more and more of your travelogue and working days in KL, I am reminded of Yvonne's last business trip when she worked for Inglis/Whirlpool. She spent a week in Benton Harbor, Michigan, which on the map is not too far away from Toronto. However, it is a world away...after seeing black ghetto areas, and hearing the casual mention of six or seven murders a night, she wondered aloud to her co-workers who could possibly live in such conditions. "Welcome to America" was the only response. She might as well have been told "Welcome to your nightmare.")

The phrase "take durian" sounds like taking some exotic drug. I looked up durian in my dictionary, and it mentioned a sweet-tasting, but foul-smelling fruit. I suppose eating durian fruit is one thing, but how do you "take durian"? (Here I am thinking smoking or white powder...)

I am certainly not surprised that there should be interest in SF in Malaysia and Singapore, but this is a part of the world where information about resident fandom just doesn't emerge. The idea of a con in Singapore sounds interesting, but I can imagine that the costs involved might be prohibitive. (I may have a source of information about an upcoming Japanese Worldcon bid, which will be a real jolt of culture shock for just about everyone.)

Planet Hollywood seems to be everywhere, which may be one reason why the chain declared bankruptcy, but still operates. I know some have shut down, but the restaurants in Toronto and Niagara Falls still do great business. I don't know why...I ate at the Toronto PH once, and the food was bland and tasteless. Also, I have no desire to act as a walking billboard for PH with their assorted t-shirts, same for the Hard Rock Cafe... I am also not a star-struck moviegoer, so eating at PH was no particular thrill.

David Bofinger's Aussiecon diary...yet another reminder of a Worldcon I couldn't get to. (Some Australian fans react to my complaint by saying they can't get to most Worldcons, given the costs of around the world travel.) I heard much about the level of organization (good, but not great), the interference of the hotels to grab all the money they could at the last minute, and the carping from some American fans who expected that everything around them would be just like home, and it wasn't.

The Newcomer's Guide...I find that fandom has a greater percentage than the general public of people who have some kind of medical problem (hypoglycemia, diabetes, degenerative diseases) or food problems (gluten, salt or lactose intolerances). Yes, I agree that the people on this panel knew their audience. However, the usual person with such a disability or intolerance knows enough to plan

ahead for themselves in case of a problem. So many fans seem unable to do this simple planning, and demand that conventions cater to their necessities. The fact that they fail to notify the convention of the needs seems to have nothing to do with it.

I'm sure that non-Australians may have been a little confused by Australian references at an Australian Worldcon. As understandable as that is, I guess not having been to many American conventions meant they really didn't know how to cater to the majority of their attendees, namely Americans. Our own Worldcon bid for Toronto in 2003 is decided upon this coming Labour Day, and because we are so close to the United States, and know so many American fans, as much as there will be a track of programming or two to profile Canadian pros and Canadian SF interests (should we win the Worldcon, of course), I expect that the majority of the convention will cater to the majority of the attendees, and usually, 80 to 85% of those attendees are American. (By the way, I do know who Pauline Hanson is. The sooner she gets her well-deserved political obscurity, the better.)

Our Worldcon bid also ran into the same problems most other bids did, expensive food from the hotel, which banned bringing food from the outside, plus exorbitant prices. Our group found a non-convention hotel across the street with a relaxed attitude, and a catering staff savvy enough to recognize an opportunity to satisfy out-of-towners and make a few dollars. So, the Toronto in 2003 party was across the street, and had good attendance, and it was held for a lot less money.

I suppose I ought to say a little more about what I was doing in Malaysia, to give some context to what I write about the country. Thanks for reminding me of this.

The first point I should make is that there are very strong ties between Malaysia and Australia, based mainly upon the large number of Malaysians who have attended a university in Australia. These strong personal ties are sabotaged, more or less continuously, by two groups in Australian society: politicians (regardless of party), and newspaper proprietors and their lackeys (hm, am I making an unnecessary distinction here?). The Australian universities maintain an office in Kuala Lumpur (and a few in other parts of Malaysia, for that matter) to smooth the way for young Malaysians wanting to follow in their parents' footsteps. (The same outfit, IDP Education Australia, operates in many other countries in Asia – and for example in the years I was in Malaysia the same office looked after young people in Vietnam wanting to study in Australia. Now there's an office in downtown Hanoi.) The in-country offices are always on the look-out for additional work.

In the middle 1990s Malaysia began an expansion of its polytechnic system. This system isn't quite like that I've read of in other countries, so a one-sentence summary might be useful. The polytechnic system exists primarily to train supervisors and middle-level managers for manufacturing industry in Malaysia, and the polytechnics provide two and three year training courses for high-performing (in mathematics and science) year 11 (well, lower sixth, I suppose) high schools graduates, with a course consisting of six months' industry placement plus either three or five semesters of twenty weeks of forty-hour timetables classes (yes, they work part of Saturday).

The expansion program was to be funded by a World Bank loan, and amongst the World Bank conditions for the loan is a requirement to spend a certain amount on research. In 1996 IDP Education Australia won a couple of projects with me as team leader. I therefore spent a lot of time from July 1997 to November 1999 in Malaysia. One project involved carrying out a study of the early working careers of the young graduates, training some Malaysians from the polytechnics in 'how to do it' on the side. (The contract only required carrying out the study – the training of locals was my wrinkle.) The other project involved working with representative industries to determine what they wanted from polytechnic graduates; there I used mostly Australian consultants in the team.

Malaysia's standard of living is complex to describe – I won't even try – but just last weekend I was reflecting on the fact that I felt more 'in touch' with Kuala Lumpur than I do with places like Melbourne or Sydney or Adelaide – I know where to get stuff, and it is way ahead of sleepy old Adelaide.

You also refer to "take durian". One of the joys of working in Malaysia was the extended exposure to peninsular English, a far more lively language, I feel, than Australian English. One element of peninsular English is that one does not 'eat' food, one 'takes' it (while in 'standard English' we would be happy to talk about 'taking nourishment'). There should be more glimpses of this earlier in this issue.

-jf

eFNAC #2

Bravo on such a project to reproduce many of Allan Bray's photographs. I'll be looking forward to them in future issues.

I think that most people who have had experience in running conventions (I've had about 16 years' experience myself) learn over the years that to achieve the best results, you've got to take a business-like approach to it. Assess the job at hand, see what resources you can apply to it, and don't stop until the work is done. Then, at the con, make sure whatever your job was works, and runs smoothly, Tear down at the end, and try to assess what the final result was, and various responses to it. Too many do a half-assed job, and shrug their shoulders when it doesn't work properly. When you do that, people won't return to the con, and everyone's efforts, good or bad, are for naught. The secret to running a good convention...everyone has to give a damn about what they do, and if you can actually enjoy it, an even better job will come from your work. Excellent essay about Greg Benford's Timescape. I remember reading the novel many years ago, and thinking that not only was a compelling story, but it was about time travel, which may not be scientific, but is certainly adventurous, and was one of my favorite ideas in SF. Obviously, Pocket Books thought a lot of the novel, paying Benford some good money for the right to use Timescape as an imprint of its SF books.

Before starting on these fanzines, I wrote a loc on *Stet* 9. There may be too much in this fanzine in terms of it being an almanac...perhaps it is more of a fannish handbook, and such handbooks have been created by many groups over the years. I think the Smiths have done a great research job, and they filled in a lot of gaps in my knowledge of esoteric fan phrases and historic vignettes. They do fall into the trap that they include themselves from time to time, and include some of their own terms in the fannish lexicon. A historian must be as impartial as possible. They have made a few mistakes...for example, there was a winner of the 1997 CUFF where they state there was no race. But these things are minor, and if they intend to do this kind of almanac next year, they will have the opportunity to fix their mistakes.

I get one other fanzine in a .pdf format, and that is *BCSFazine*, the club zine of the British Columbia SF Association. They use the regular 8 x 11 1/2" portrait format of page, and they send it to you in a .pdf file. It is not a paper fanzine, but has the potential to be one. When I receive it, I print in on my colour printer, and the final product is a single-side fanzine. They don't eliminate the costs of the paper so much as transfer the costs to the reader, and I don't mind the expense of printing it out. I prefer a paper fanzine for various reasons, and I'm sure I'm not the only recipient of your fanzines to print them out anyway...as Michael Waite and Robert Lichtman prove later on in the local.

Although cost-shifting is a very popular economic ploy nowadays, that isn't the primary reason for eFNAC appearing as a PDF 'zine. It is true that mounting costs, especially for postage (and at a time when the speed and quality of service is declining), are discouraging, but they are not yet overwhelming. Except if you have a cache of colour photographs... I once published a paper fanzine with a colour photograph (and a number of b&ws) and even after thirty-six years the nightmare of the cost lives with me still! I do want to include colour photographs on a regular basis, and publish a frequent fanzine – ergo an electronic 'zine.

But the story changes when the readers begin printing the magazine themselves. As you say, this does imply a financial shift of responsibility which I hadn't intended (hence the design of the page to suit a screen, not a portrait-orientation piece of paper). I'm not sure that the concession I make with this issue is appropriate: comments?

-jf

Cuyler Brooks <nedbrooks@sprynet.com>

Hi John - ezine arrived and displays beautifully. I enjoyed the trip report more than I would have the trip! I would be very put out to find myself up to my neck in cave water without prior warning...*

"Silverfish" seems a singularly inappropriate name for a book store.**

When I put up big home-made wooden bookshelves in Newport News, I rubbed them with FreeWax, which contains an insecticide, and in spite of all the old books I loaded them with over 30 years, never saw any living silverfish.

I use a "17-inch" Gateway2000 EV700 monitor - the actual diagonal measure is 16 inches and the text looks fine. But why is the screen 33 color photo so much sharper than the one of similar size on screen 34?***

The con photos are sharp if a bit dark.

Not a lot I can say about the worldcon report. I go to these things infrequently and don't remember a lot about it after. The only fan I recognized was Jerry Kaufman, looking remarkably like he did the first time I saw him nearly 40 years ago!

** I must confess that we were given very strong hints, but I still think some of the ladies were surprised.*

*** Some of the books have been around for a while – but not long enough to warrant the name. The proprietor (Raman) has, at the store's website, a good yarn (which could easily appear in a fanzine) about his struggles in clearing some books through customs just after the new airport in Kuala Lumpur opened. (<http://www.silverfishbooks.com>)*

**** Screen 34 photo was shot into the sun, something done only by the truly-hardy when you are that close to the equator.*

-jf

James Allen <James.Allen@vu.edu.au>

Got it fine the first time. Interesting 47 page fanzine. It would be a little strange to do that page count in other than an electronic format, but here it is just how long everything is. That circumstance might actually be preferable to trying to work out multiples of four when copying on A3 paper somewhere in the wee dark hours, when 6x4 can become 25 or so I thought at the time! The PDF format is nice as it gives colour photos too--I realized this when I tested a new colour ink jet with one of Terry Frost's recent zines--much more vibrant.

Ah Aussiecon 3, safely months in the past. I did enjoy reading Evelyn Leeper's report of it. I was interested in the differences to US worldcons she pointed to in the conclusion. What would she have made of something that was actually an Australian con, rather than the diffident, "what will they say if we do this" con that was A3? At times I needed a guide to A3 that explained things like the Green room--I have not seen such a room before at a con.

I had exactly the same reaction to the end of Evelyn's report. It's one of the great advantages of reading an 'outsider's report that you somehow feel more confident about the observations – or at least I do.

-jf

roman orszanski <roman@ncver.edu.au>

A busy week, but I finally got around to reading eFNAC1.

I enjoyed the Malaysian diary, but sometimes wished you'd gone into more detail -- particularly for those of us less familiar with the country.*

Why, for instance, would we expect a Bengali stall to convert Thana from vegetarianism? (screen 6: "It worked out OK except that Thana was still vegetarian.") Indeed, why would that be desirable?*

I am curious as to why "Japanese High Tea" should be a Malaysian ritual: please write more on the topic for us tea-lovers. Similarly, what happens during Deepavali? Some more detail about local customs/festivals (perhaps in a sidebar?) would be appreciated.***

The story about arsenic poisoning reminded me of the article in the current Stet: might Anwar's levels (230 microgramme/gramme creatine) be indicative of someone trying to build up an immunity?**** was he planning to dispose of a colleague via arsenic? Or are the plots getting too convoluted?

The economic recovery just reaffirms the belief that World Bank SAPs (structural adjustment policies) are more likely to further harm the country than be of any benefit to anyone other than transnationals looking for bargain resources. From memory, Mahathir took the sensible step of freezing currency movements out of Malaysia. That favourite of neo-liberal economists, Adam Smith warned very early on of the dire consequences of unregulated capital. The current thinking is that an appropriately- applied Tobin tax (on foreign exchange dealings), with a sliding scale depending on the size of the currency exchange, could only be beneficial for the countries involved.

I'm glad to see you continue to champion the Tufte books, they are a marvellous source of inspiration & advice (I'm working my way through the NCVER copies at the moment).

Having noted on screen 29 that everyone wanted to photograph Thana, why haven't you done so?*****

It'd be nice to see some of your Malaysian photos as a counterpoint to ancient fan photos. (Did anyone photograph you in the sarong? It would make a great cover....)*****

As for the other major item, I am curious as to the Graham Stone mystery. Bruce, who is the kindest of souls, would hardly make fun of someone. I recall the reference as a minor comment, highlighting the fact much history is lost. Perhaps David Bofinger, as a Futurian, magnified the "slight" -- we'll just have to check the written speech to see.

**One thing at a time. There are still a few episodes to go on this one.*

***Thana had/has a great admiration of things Bengali (her background is Tamil), and she always encouraged me to try the full range of available foodstuffs. And it is always easier to lead by example. On the other hand, since Thana is vegetarian only on the required 'fasting' days (and even then she would occasionally forget), it wasn't a question of conversion, but rather bad timing in going to that stall on a 'vegetarian' day.*

****Much too complicated for me. Some occasional notes may intermittently appear.*

*****Similar theories were circulating in Malaysia while I was there. I shall take this up again in a couple of months when I write about the 'political' side of life in Malaysia.*

******There are a couple of photos around, and one of them will be published here one day.*

******Yes indeed, but alas one which cuts me off at the waist, thus missing the point.*

- jf

Robert Lichtman robertlichtman@yahoo.com

Thanks for eFNAC No. 2, which I have sitting here besides me in all its laserprinted and inkjetted glory. The color photos by the late Allan Bray that lead off the issue are a real treat, particularly the one of the Four Foysters. No doubt if I were better steeped in Australian fandom secret lore I would know what the protruding index finger signifies. For now, I can but speculate.*

In the photograph on page, excuse me, screen 3 Gordon Dickson in profile looks rather like a somewhat surly version of FAPA's OE, Ken Forman. He's a man of many resemblances, though, as he looks more like Norm Spinrad in the photos on screens 5 and 8. Perhaps his visage on screen 7 is the Real Gordon Dickson, because it doesn't remind me of anyone. (I don't know that I've ever actually met Mr. Dickson.)

Your report on Syncon '79 seemed increasingly familiar as I made my way through it, and so I wasn't surprised to note at the end that it was reprinted from your GUFF report. I can relate to your frustration, as reported on screen 12, over auctioneer Keith Curtis' failure to offer up the fanzines you were interested in. This demonstrates to me that the aversion of most members of British fandom to buying old fanzines dates back much further than I'd previously thought. Had I been there, I would have made some sort of noise from the audience to urge Keith Curtis to put them on the block. Barring that, I would have tried to arrange for a private sale after the auction was over. I did this on a number of items at LACon III's auction that never made it to the floor with satisfactory results.

An interesting article about Greg Benford's *Timescape*, but it doesn't evoke any particular comment except to wonder whether it was intentional on your part to switch typeface from Times Roman (or whatever it is) to typewriter pica and back again on screens 26 through 28**. Well, I will add that this is the only one of Greg's novels I've ever actually read, and a particularly enjoyable element of it for me was his depiction of his (and his brother Jim's) earlier selves as young physics students.

It's somewhat frustrating to read your review of *Stet* No. 9 since I haven't yet received my copy. When I began noticing mentions of it cropping up all over the pages of paper fanzines, I sent Leah an e-mail inquiring as to whether mine have been sent and gotten lost in the mail. She replied that she and Dick began circulating the issue by sending out the overseas copies first and that mine would eventually be posted. This was close to a month ago and I'm still waiting.

Leah is somewhat premature where she, in her editorial, "laments the exit of the mimeographed fanzine (although she*** doesn't mention Twiltone)" since although there hasn't been an issue in far too long Geri Sullivan's *Idea* is still both mimeographed and on Twiltone.

As for what expenses DUFF and other fan funds cover of the winner's trip, I don't know what the current practice is in either DUFF or TAFF but when I took over administration I let the fund cover all of my expenses while on the road with the exception of things like postcards (and stamps) to send to friends and family and for the souvenir teeshirts I got my kids along the way. When Pam Wells came over on her trip, I gave her a chunk of money to defray her costs while in the country. Certainly if the funds were less flush the old standard of air fare, convention membership and hotel room during the convention might have to be retrenched to, but these days both funds seem have ample funds to take

care of other expenses, particularly including inland travel while making one's way around the host country.

Speaking of my own administration, when I won TAFF in 1989 I received \$3,523.34 from outgoing administrator Jeanne Gomoll. I took in from donations, voting fees and fundraising efforts a total of \$4,592.85. I passed on to my successor, Jeanne Bowman, a total of \$4,625.98. The difference was expenses including my trip, part of Pam Wells' trip, postage, printing, fundraising and miscellaneous office expenses.

Interesting that the Australian winners of DUFF, GUFF and FFANZ over the years have tended to be from Melbourne most of the time. I would suggest that rather than this being some sort of a plot it simply reflects that there is probably a large voting bloc in Melbourne. Am I right? No such pattern can be detected in the list of U.S. winners of TAFF over the years - well, except for the curious back-to-back winning of the race by two fans from Glen Ellen about a decade ago.

You wonder what sort of impact fanzines appearing more or less annually such as *Trap Door*, *Stet*, *Outworlds* and *Mimosa* have on fandom. I would hope that it's setting an example of excellence that outweighs their infrequency. It doesn't seem to me that non-apa fanzine fandom has largely retreated to in-person and on-line contact, since plenty of fanzines more frequent than the four mentioned above continue to appear. Perhaps you're just not getting them.

Regarding eFNAC's on-screen format, let me put in a strong vote for continuing to double-column the text. Even though you use a fairly large typesize, it's still less easy to track all the way across a line on the screen - particularly with a 17-inch monitor (I see Dennis McCunney has the same set-up as I do at work even to the dot pattern) - than it is to read two-column text. I also strongly favor justified right margins to ragged right, though this is a much closer call. What are the obvious problems you refer to on screen 37, top of column 2?****

* *Me too. I really can't remember all the details, so for now I'll just have to give **you** the finger.*

** *It's a secret code. No prizes.*

*** *Actually, I'm the one who mentioned Twiltone, and am therefore at fault. Leah, she don't say nuttin'.*

**** *Sometimes the wordspacing is too great for visual comfort - but fixing that would mean bring back the hyphen* -jf

[David Bofinger <David.Bofinger@dsto.defence.gov.au>](mailto:David.Bofinger@dsto.defence.gov.au)

John, some replies to the replies to my report on AussieCon Three. I don't know what your policy is on these sorts of replies: we don't necessarily want to get a long conversation going where we argue these points.

Robert Lichtman made the interesting observation that he hadn't expected to get much out of my report because he'd never been able to calibrate me as a reviewer. I hope I haven't been entered on the "vitriolic killjoy" page, or at least that I'm only there in pencil. This report is probably the nastiest writing I've ever done, a consequence of doing it when I was still angry. If you'd told me at the time it would be picked up by John Foyster's fanzine then I'd have made it much more restrained. Well, actually, no, I wouldn't: I'd have laughed in your face, but if you'd convinced me somehow then I'd have made changes.

Amplifying my remark about Crown, casinos have always seemed to me a very nasty industry, ruining lives at a disproportionate rate with an incentive to predation on addicts. Crown Casino in particular has been doing this as a recipient of Victorian government tax concessions, which I find appalling. My dislike of Crown Casino isn't, therefore, any quasi-religious objection to gambling as such. *

My characterisation of Gregory Benford as considerate was based largely on my impressions of his talk in Sydney on Deep Time. Like every talk it had its share of really stupid, self-promoting and/or barrow-pushing questions. Benford took them all seriously, and was polite in answering them, as you'd expect. But even after the talk he raised a couple of them with the organisers wondering if he'd misunderstood, etc.. Perhaps "considerate" isn't quite the right word, but nothing more accurate springs to mind. I'm not sure what Robert means by "admirably outspoken", perhaps it isn't even contradictory. I recently got a letter from Benford saying that he liked my con report, so he obviously doesn't mind reading some unkind stuff.

Robert mentions that he looked up Bruce Gillespie's Speech of Honour on the web, and that it didn't seem so harsh on Graham. Actually we don't have to look to value judgements to find contradictions between the record and my recollections: for instance, I write that Bruce implied the Futurians were extinct, whereas the record states explicitly in two different places that the Futurians are still active. I remember this in particular because I didn't quite have the rudeness or the inconsiderate courage to do a Monty Python impersonation of "we're not dead yet" during the speech. Also the section on Graham is much shorter than I remember.

I don't know where the record of the speech came from, whether it was a transcript or Bruce's notes or what, but one of us is definitely reporting what we remembered, rather than what actually happened. (If it's me, I can only apologise and hope it's bad hearing rather than any moral failing. If it's Bruce, then I guess I have no trouble with it: a speech describing what he really wanted to say may be more valuable than one with any slips in it anyway. Though it should be presented as one or the other.)**

Am I in a minority opinion? Well, probably, at least to the extent that "minority" has meaning. Perhaps it's better to say I was well to one side of the distribution of opinion. Was I just "pissed off" with John Foyster? Well, I'd hate to think that mattered. What I was trying to say was that I thought Foyster's approach (e.g. reading long passages from bad works, rather than good) was in error. Hopefully people can make up their own minds as to whether I'm right or not.

I included these opinions as a datum for the guide of anyone doing something similar in the future. Particularly because the Futurians were, at the time, trying to start a program of free science fiction conventions in Sydney. (I'm pleased to say we had our first on the weekend, to general and at times even impressive success.)

Bob Smith writes that my report was "utterly devoid of humour". OK, I'll admit there weren't a lot of jokes, but interpreted literally I could infer from Bob's statement that he sees gnawing off extraneous limbs as normal behaviour.

Bob also sees this as a Futurian tradition. I infer from this that either (a) he hasn't looked at either my or Ian Woolf's web pages on the Futurians lately, which is fair enough, or (b) that he believed everything in them was meant seriously, which is ... disturbing. I'm curious how we've spread this deadly serious view of ourselves, as I find it hard to believe I'm generally responsible.

I note that the only thing that saved me from Bob's complaints was the length of my report. Size, it seems, does matter.

** I'm not sure that my reaction to this comment about casinos is one that will be understood. As someone who doesn't gamble, I'm really not well-placed to make comments. On the other hand, occasionally my work has taken me behind the scenes in casinos. In combination, this probably leads to a weird view. To me, the problem is that casinos give too good value for money – such good value that people become addicted. If I buy a book in a bookshop (one of those places that used to "retail" books before Amazon.com came along) then I know that the retailer takes for himself (or his company) about half the money I pay for the book. This is fairly typical of retail sales, though probably at the high end. But in a casino, as a result of government regulation, the casino operator is allowed to take (in Australia) only about 10% of what the customer pays for a transaction, which is definitely at the low end of the retail margin. That's pretty good value – for the customer: no wonder the casino does plenty of repeat business. At present in Australia the various governments are expressing "concern" about problem gambling, and arguing the merits of cutting down on the number of gambling outlets. But why not give a larger reward to the hardworking casino operators and pokie licensees and allow them – hell, **require them** – to retain, say, 50% of each investment? Of course, this might make casinos and pokie machines less attractive...*

*** I guess I wasn't paying that much attention to the detail in Bruce's speech, but the transcript seems pretty close to what I heard. This seems like another one of those "mileage varies" situations. - jf*

Bob Smith, 37 St Johns Road, Bradbury, NSW 2560

Well, my trusty Epsom Stylus Color 400 and Acrobat 4.0 in Landscape mode produced 47 perfect pages. My first reaction when the cover hit the screen was a bunch of boisterous Jews possibly being rude to the Pope, but then I spied the mischievous Foyster countenance. Acrobat must have a built-in sympathy mode for tired fannish eyes, because pictures and fonts increased in size, and I think double-

printed, which was hard on my black cartridge. Printed on Reflex Gold eFNAC2 is a most attractive fanzine, John, and if you haven't seen a hardcopy you are missing something.

Its becoming more and more evident to me that I missed an awful lot of goodies by gafiating back then. Ghod! How could I have not known about Syncon'79, or not read TIMESCAPE? (Perhaps Greg's tachyons could whisk me back to the mid-1970's and I'll start all over...)

However, the photos and conrep greatly appreciated, and I chuckled at your frustrations with the auction. (I recall Lee Harding becoming so impatient with me at Syncon'70, leaping onto the stage and taking over...) Actually, on the shelf in front of me now is the original Syncon logo. At the Syncon'72 auction I remember being bewildered by the frantic bidding for Frank Herbert stuff.

Having read Evelyn Leeper and David Bofinger on the Foyster paper I guess I came semi-prepared for the Real Thing, but I am afraid I found it a trifle too academic for my simple science fictional tastes. In view of what Robert Lichtman says in your letter column Greg must have been practising great restraint...(Does a sf convention really need an "academic track"?)

Your thoughts on DUFF administration and lack of local conreps causes an irritable itch with me. In my enthusiasm at re-discovering Fandom I actually sent money to the last DUFF person, which according to my bank statements has never been presented; and I haven't seen any conrep of the Worldcon he attended anyway...

I am still getting used to ACROBAT READER but will probably use its convenience with the next eFNAC and try adjusting my angle to the screen. Printing it uses an awful lot of black ink. Yeah, I know the simplest solution is to get on the Net, but ... I am certainly comfortable with the layout.

Interesting to reflect on the problems of diplomacy and tact in hotels in other countries. During my time in Japan in the early 1950's Japanese politeness was pushed to the limit because of the enormous variety of nations "occupying" their country. There were very few husband and wife or family allowed during the Occupation and Korean War period (the US did make exceptions, I know), so couples booking into a hotel could invariably be suspect. The inscrutable oriental image prevailed.

Umm, I don't get the connection between a Foyster fanzine electronic or otherwise - and Vonnegut. (I thought TIMEQUAKE was his last book...)

Me either

-jf

Tailpiece

Thanks for reading this far.

If you want a copy of the fourth edition of **eFNAC itself**, send me an email with the subject line reading 'FNAC4' (nothing else required). If you also want the photographic supplement, send another email with the subject line reading 'FNACb4'.

If you are happy to receive all of **eFNAC** as it is published, send an email with the subject line 'FNACp'. To receive all the photo supplements, send an email with the subject line 'FNACp'.

To understand the above instructions, send a \$50 note to the editorial address and receive by return mail a fully-authorized training program and a do-it-yourself pre-authenticated certificate of competency.

Letters of comment with the subject line 'FNAClox3' would be much appreciated – and are likely to appear in the next issue.

Next issue in around a month. Or later.

eFNAC Volume 2, number 3 (part a)

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Available for the usual. Electronic communication preferred.

Copies available on floppy diskette to those who are not connected.