



The Thirty Second issue of a sortof letter substitute, kinda thing, maybe weekly, maybe not, from:

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Available only via the net at the moment. Welcome to the new readers and see the colophon for the usual disclaimer. Thanks to Mark McCann for computer usage and computer advice. Supporting Maureen Kincaid Speller for TAFF and Toronto in '03 for the 2003 WorldCon. This issue dated, already, 9/2/98

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The Fanzine review column.

I judge the success of one of my fanzines or one that I have been involved with, on two criteria: it gets a laugh from the readership, or it engages them intellectually. Other factors come into play, like legibility, grammar and frequency etc, but I regard these as secondary, contributory factors. This is also how I judge other zines.

Banana Wings Seven: I like this. It is a good fanzine with some good writing, but the only thing that really stands out in any issue, and this one is no exception, is Paul Kincaid's fanzine review column. But first the rest of issue seven.

Unfortunately this is mainly about conventions.

In the introduction Claire Briarly postulates the idea of establishing some form of convention criticism as currently exists for fanzines. It is my belief however, that conventions live and die on membership and the only valid critical reaction is non-attendance at the next one. That does mean that a completely unrelated Eastercon or Novacon bears the brunt of the previous years disaster but there's the rub.

The concept of critically reviewing conventions in fanzines is alien because the review will not entice anyone to go to the convention and spend money, after the fact. Nor will it alter other attendee's views of that con, as they will have had their own experiences. Con reports or criticisms can only tell you about the con from one perspective and hence involve a certain amount of Schadenfraude or an element of 'you lucky bastard, you didn't have to put up with unmitigated disaster.' To be honest I wasn't particularly impressed with the argument, although it was well worth putting down, and therefore I set off on the rest of the zine with a slightly biased viewpoint.

John Richard's account of being the Intervention chairman has confirmed my recent decision to hold a relaxacon in Belfast at some time in the future and not the full,

general SF con that everyone else here wants. A nightmare story of demands and pressures that I vaguely recall from my NIcon days but which, even if humorously written, I don't engage with. Steve Green's account of the organisation and running of the fanroom had enough in it to keep me reading it to the end - Steve has always been good at that. Damning with faint praise, I know, but there you have it.

Claire Briarly does go Up and Down and Round and Round. She also makes jokes about going 'Waaaa' a little too often. Steve Jeffrey and Joseph Nicholas get their own loccol and the rest of the mob put up with second place. A rather downbeat analysis of the election night, comparing it to Jefferson Airplane's appearance at Woodstock, from Mark Plummer and it is all over bar the Waaing. On the whole some interesting bits and some not so interesting bits - I was briefly engaged and that must count as a victory.

But then there is Paul's fanzine review column. This must rank as one of the most thoughtful and intelligent columns, let alone review columns, that has appeared in a fanzine in quite a while. In this issue the whole emphasis of his reviews is on how fanzines elicit a sense of joy of being in fandom and the community associated with it. This is certainly not a new idea but his own joy at reading these zines is obvious and wonderfully conveyed. Because of this I certainly intend to follow up on his recommendations.

What Paul does in his columns is construct an ideal of fandom and it's community - what he thinks it is, or should be. The fanzines that he reviews are then judged against that theory. As his ideal of fandom closely, but not exactly, fits mine I find his conclusions persuasive. He also conveys them in a way that is not, as some of his detractors would have you believe, nasty or vindictive but with critical appraisal and a fair crack of the whip.

For this column alone I thank the both editors and look forward immensely to the next issue.

(This was originally to be published when Banana Wings 7 had come out, apologies for the datedness. A review of Banana Wings 8 (with Plokta and International Revolutionary Gardener) can be found in Victor Gonzalez's latest issue of Squib, due out for Corflu UK. Contact Victor at: [squib@galaxy-7.net](mailto:squib@galaxy-7.net) to be put on the mailing list or go to <http://www.galaxy-7.net/squib> to view previous issues.)

Before the locs I really think I should mention the brief fling with notoriety that Ansible 127 has given me. Needless to say those of you who haven't received Corflu UK PR 2 won't know what the fuss is about. I therefore refer you to their home page to view the article in question, or the original version at my own web site. Read the comments in context; make up your own mind. And now, you. Your comments on TW 30 first of all.

Mark McCann Markmark@nicrc.thegap.com "Err, Tommy, I do hope that TW30 was some kind of Swiftian satire. If it wasn't then I really can't understand where you're coming from. The simple truth is that the IRA is the by-product of a knee-jerk, no-brain fascism that believes that nothing in life is more important than nationhood. And that includes life itself. Growing up in a community where there was always a certain ambiguity over the morality of the IRA's activities, I am aware of the powerful attraction that this sort of 'A Nation Once Again' thing has. But it really doesn't stand up to any serious ethical critique. Violence for political ends is wrong in any circumstances and, in a decade when the idea of 'nationhood' has become increasingly tenuous, to kill someone because of it is ludicrous." ((The idea of the current IRA leadership fighting for ideals of nation hood, an idealism that is suspect at the best of times, is ludicrous and was not what I was getting at in the article. Although, as the next part of your loc illustrates, you were getting there:))

"The fact that the IRA carries out 'policing' activities in their local communities is similarly suspect. They shoot drug dealers who, let's face it, in Northern Ireland are mostly just young men selling a bit of marijuana or E – coincidentally, the very drugs that IRA prisoners like party on down to while incarcerated in the H Blocks. And haven't you done some illegal drugs in your time? Aren't you being a wee bit hypocritical then when you suggest that people should be killed for conducting a business which you yourself have supported financially on occasions? If it was you who were suspected of drug-dealing which would you prefer? Being taken down a back-alley and having the shit beaten out of you by a half-educated thug from the Bogside getting his rocks off on a power trip? Or being tried by a British court of law? Call me a West Brit if you like but I know who I'd take my chances with Oh, and by the way, best album of 1997? Dots and Loops by Stereolab (that's despite Patricia calling it 'tedious banality'). Oh, by the way, Good issue! Mmmmmmark" ((Again the whole thrust of the article was that whilst I emotionally agree with some of the policing activities of the IRA, intellectually I don't agree with any of them. The example of the child molester was an indication of where that ambivalence draws a line and you are right, I do not agree with the IRA's hypocritical punishment shootings of 12 year old joy riders, or drug dealers. Coming to terms with this dichotomy is, as I'm sure you are aware, one of the major psychological issues that the past 26 odd years has engendered. Oh, and Stereolab are cool, but not that cool.))

Cheryl Morgan cmorgan@ceres.wallis.com "Hi Tommy, TW31 arrived OK. Australia is just as bad as the US for overdoing St. Patrick's Day. An Irish friend of mine was out there with me a couple of years back and was appalled at what went on. I think he felt like his country had been annexed by Disney. I wasn't surprised to see a bunch of people jump on you for the IRA justice stuff. What I think they missed was the subtext behind this. The way I see it is that if you are a Catholic in NI you have three choices for law enforcement: a) the army of an occupying foreign power, b) a police force run and staffed primarily by Protestants, or c) the IRA. In such a situation I can quite understand why people would opt for the IRA. (Which is not to say that the British army and even

the Ulster police are not trying to be fair, but this is politics, not reality.) ((Cheryl continues in a later message)) I don't think we'll ever get anywhere with NI unless everyone understands the set-up. For example, most English people simply don't understand why NI Catholics don't trust the police and army. Equally most Americans don't understand that withdrawing the army would result in either a separate NI state with a civil war or a united Ireland with a massive UDF terrorism problem. Without such understanding, any proposed fixes are doomed to failure." ((That's not a bad assessment. I wouldn't necessarily agree with your subtext, although I know a lot of people (an awful lot) who would. The local police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), are in a tough position. 86% are Protestant and of them a small percentage are not people I would like to meet socially, let alone in a professional position, and they carry their personal political viewpoints to their work. It is a bit messy and hard to be completely objective.))

Garth Spencer golem@direct.ca "Dear Tom, I read with interest your profile of life in Northern Ireland. It made more sense to me than anything else I've heard, because for the first time I was getting some first-hand context. People keep leaving the context out of events when they become news, especially since "news" was redefined as "spectacles and violence and disasters and other excitement". I still have no idea who's fighting for what in Bosnia, or what the civil wars in Lebanon were about." ((I refer you to my sig. File: "[Gladstone] spent his declining years trying to guess the answer to the Irish Question; unfortunately, whenever he was getting warm, the Irish secretly changed the question." W. C. Sellar, 1066 And All That.))

((Now onto comments on TW31))

Murray Moore murray.moore@encode.com "Dear Tommy, We have lost APPARATCHIK but we still have Lesley Reece, a fact for which I am grateful. ((Hey, tell me about it)) I wonder, Lesley, have you ever considered the alternative of eating food over drinking coffee, as a means of keeping your biological system functioning? I am an outsider in this matter, being a drinker of neither coffee, tea, nor alcohol in any of its forms. Separate mentions of The X-Files and of Seinfeld in TW 31, prompt me to comment that I won't miss either, being an aficionado of neither series. I have watched a few episodes of both, but neither concept clicked for me. If I watch the first episode in a series, and it clicks with me, I become compulsive and stick with it until its end, however many months, or years, later. The VCR makes this possible. ((I'm so thankful that Sky TV has Law & Order, one of the series that I became hooked on in Canada.))

Ned Brooks reports "I have that book." I would be shocked if Ned did not have at least one copy of "that book," whatever the title under discussion. Don Fitch: IMHO, I know, is the acronym of In My Humble Opinion. What, PT (pray tell), be FWIW? ((No idea, guv. Don? Anyone?))

Alison Scott [alison@fuggles.demon.co.uk](mailto:alison@fuggles.demon.co.uk) "I felt, on the whole, that there wasn't enough coffee in Lesley's article. My eyes lit up when I started reading -- ooh, lovely, a long piece of coffee-fixation -- and then it had the temerity to waft off in other directions. More blatant coffee porn, that's what I want. Luke McGuff says "I liked the Oyster Band" in response to your piece on the Irish Question. Oysterband are neither Irish nor past tense. They have a quite recent album, 'Deep Dark Ocean,' which is mellow and much less angry than their last few. It was evidently recorded in the bright days immediately after the election and before anybody had caught on. Recommended, but then they're my favourite live band. My favourite live not-a-band is Richard Thompson, mentioned by Marc Ortlieb, and I'm still smarting from the misery of having to go all the way to Guildford to see his current tour. I remember reading an issue of 'Crawdaddy' and being struck by the tales of people travelling thousands of miles to go to see people in concert on tours that I'd missed because it's quite hard to get a tube back from Shepherd's Bush late at night. It's become a modern cliché that people always justify the expense, dirt and grind of living in London by singing the praises of the culture, but never go to the theatre or to concerts. I'm not a theatre-goer, but music and food are wonderful here." ((All knowledge truly is in fanzines.))

IAHF: Vicki Rosenweig, Art Widner, Sandra Bond, Luke McGuff, Steve Green, Lesley Reece.

This is being distributed to a whole bunch of friends on the net, if you received this and would NOT like to be on the mailing list please accept my apologies for this intrusion and let me know so that you will not be bothered by further ramblings. If you know someone who would like to be on the mailing drop me a line.