

The Eighty Fourth issue of a sort-of letter substitute, fanzine kinda thing. Maybe weekly, maybe not. Available from:

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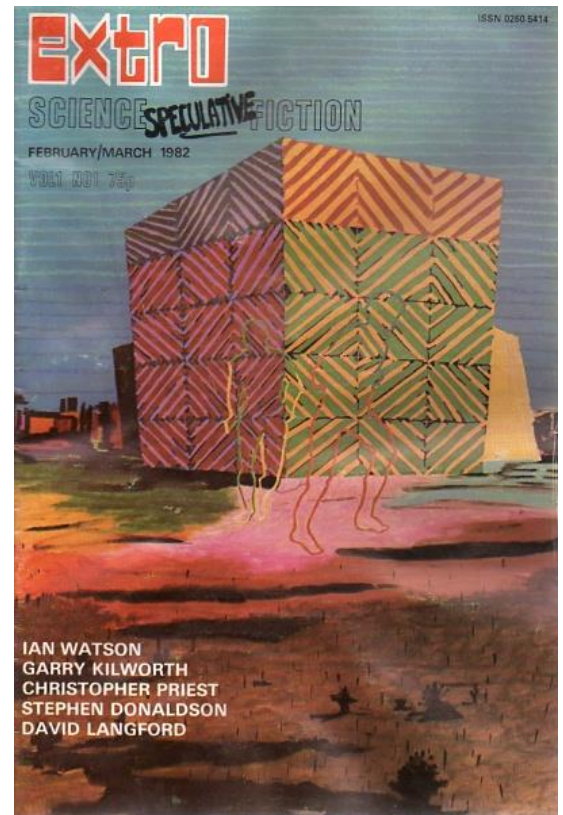
Available via the World Wide Web, or as an email attachment. I recommend the Portable Document Format (pdf) or, if you insist, a Word or Rich Text Format (rtf) can also be emailed or posted. Get in touch and we'll sort something out. Another burst of fannish energy from Tommy, proof read by Eugene Doherty. Dated, already, 02/05/2021.

## Paul Campbell (1949 – 2021)

Eugene Doherty and I met Paul Campbell in White's Tavern ahead of the 2019 Dublin WorldCon. I had the best of intentions to get an interview from him about his days in the early Belfast SF Group, memories of the late 70s and early 80s, the famous missing years and, of course, the untold story of *Extro* (<http://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/extro>) – Northern Ireland's only semi-professional SF magazine. But. We ended up drinking pints of Guinness, eating lunch and blethering the afternoon away. "Shut the tape off..." and, "You can't print that..." were frequent utterances throughout our lunch – it's been a long time since I'd drunk that much during the working day...

Like Graham below I first met Paul in White's Tavern in the mid-1980s. I'd come up to Belfast to go to University and I still don't know how I hooked up with the White's Tavern crowd but I walked in one night, said Hi and plonked myself down. Jim Mallory and Paul were looking over proofs of the archaeological magazine Jim was editor of the time, and Paul was printing and publishing via his 'December Publishing' house. Frank McKeever and Joe Nolan were regaling each other with tales too outrageous to be true and there were a few other malingerers as well. I don't think they quite knew what to do with me – I was like a stray bedraggled puppy who had plopped itself in the middle of their circle, and no one had the heart to kick it to the kerb.

It was Frank McKeever who tested my bona fides – "Olaf Stapledon?" Last and First Men, I replied... "Arthur C. Clarke?" Rendezvous with Rama... "Asimov?" Caves of Steel... "Good, good... and Heinlein?" The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress. "Ok – he's in – buy him a pint of Guinness."



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*TF: How did Extro Come about? Was it a passion, for the money or just a hobby? PC: "Robert Allen floated the idea, it seemed like a good idea at the time, it cost me substantial sums, but I've never really regretted it."*

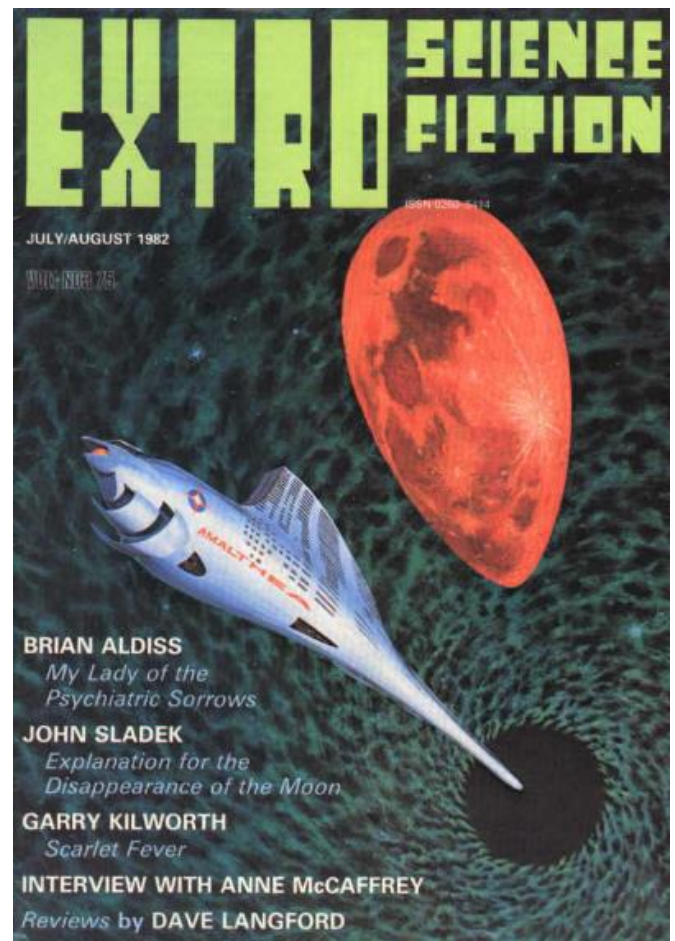
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Paul didn't take much notice of me if I was honest, and it was only when I mentioned Ian McDonald was coming to the University SF group that he perked up. Taciturn is probably the best word to describe him at the best of times – until he got talking about Science Fiction. His knowledge was immense - his taste was broad and he was always right, even when he was clearly wrong, and his taste therefore quickly became yours. His willingness to expound on what was 'right and proper' in the SF world never dimmed. I was almost like an acolyte, listening to him critique Garry Kilworth and Ian Watson – talking about them as if they would walk in any minute and buy him a pint.

And Extro – he was forgiven many an outburst for the simple reason that he and Robert pushed that to its limits. Like many I first saw it in the Irish newsagents Eason's – the poor man's WH Smiths - and was immediately smitten. The covers were abstract but this was Science Fiction – even if the knob head in charge used speculative fiction as a tag line. This was in my local shop (no Analog or Amazing there) and by gods it was published in Belfast! And it was good. If it wasn't for that dastardly bank manager issue 4 would have been published and distributed and who knows where it would have gone on to? He poo-pahed the rumours that the full print run of issue 4 was used as insulation in the loft of his ancient crumbling house on the Antrim road. But, y'know...

At that lunch he regaled us with his recent surgery – how much they'd taken out of him, how amazed the doctors were he was still alive and how, as he sipped his third pint, a single drink was liable to cause him real bother if not actually kill him! And the things he said about the Interzone editorial cabal, well I can't print that!

He was a Cantankerous Oul' bastard but he was our COB and will be missed.



**PAUL CAMPBELL, alias EXTROMAN** (by Graham Andrews)

I've been wracking my brains trying to remember where and when I first met Paul Campbell and it has just about wrecked whatever might be left of my brains. The year was definitely 1979 – or maybe 1980. It might have been in White's Tavern – which did not belong to James White, or at least I don't think so – where the Belfast Science Fiction Group of that time met to discuss how to save the Galaxy from 30,000 years of barbarism. Something like that. Or it might have been in the Blackthorn, our fall-back hostelry whenever White's had been rendered temporarily out of service. Or the Monico Bar, just round the corner. Or the Workers Educational Association building in Durham Street, where James White was giving a course on how not to write science fiction. But wherever it was, we met, which is the important thing.

Paul fitted in with the group perfectly, once he had overcome his innate taciturnity, and we all had a jolly good time before the mad rush to catch our last buses home. The tides of time rolled on, during which many other such intellectual gatherings took place, some of them at the Chester Park Hotel, near Paul's house on the Antrim Road. Anyway, at one of these soirées we made the acquaintance of local journalist Robert Allen, who published a small SF magazine called *Extro*. It wasn't long before Paul went into partnership with Robert and they proceeded to turn *Extro* into a big SF magazine.

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*TF: Was Interzone competition in getting Extro together? Did you 'steal' stories from one another? PC: "I never saw writing a novel or a short story as a competitive activity. I learned that Interzone did. And they had credentials and academic clout and self-importance, and it was all a bit depressing. Mind you, Ballard told me not to let the bastards grind me down and I was heartened by that."*

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Paul then became sole editor, publishing material by established Big Names (Bob Shaw, Ian Watson, James White), and the first story by the soon-to-be Big Name Ian McDonald. He also brought local artist Gerald Quinn back into the SF fold. Quinn had painted many covers for *New Worlds* and *Pan Books* (including Clarke's *Prelude to Space and Spaceways*, by Charles Eric Maine). His own story, 'Slow Harry', won the Aisling Gheal ('Bright Vision') award of the Irish Science Fiction Association. Paul was an energetic publisher and insightful editor. I contributed a few articles and book reviews to *Extro*, meeting Paul for intensive editorial discussions in the Chester Park. Unfortunately, *Extro* was forced to fold after just three issues, with a fourth issue in the offing.

**Memories of Paul**

"I think there was something about the excitement of seeing the first issue of *Extro* on the shelves of my very rural newsagents/bakery. I remember saving up what seemed like a large sum of money to buy it when it was published. And then realising that it was published in Belfast during the blackest depths of the Troubles. A real beacon of hope about the different worlds and possibilities beyond the horror we were stuck in. Thank you, Paul." (Mark McCann)

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*TF: One of the guests at WorldCon in Dublin is Ian McDonald. Extro was his first published story – how did you hear about him? Was he always on your radar? PC: “I didn’t have radar. I had a full-time teaching job and a clatter of children and I spent nine months until three, four, five in the morning reading, annotating and replying to submissions; in that time a half dozen manuscripts stand out.”*

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“Paul bought my first-ever professional sale for Extro back in the early 80s. Publishing was a different beast then. He met me in the Crown (end of the bar nearest the door) where I signed the contract and he handed me an envelope with the payment for the story £60 --cash. Then he bought me a pint and shook my hand and my professional career began. Oldest of old school. I bought a guitar with the cash. God I miss the 80s.” (**Ian McDonald**)

“My first encounter with Paul, albeit remotely, was picking up a copy of Extro on a school trip to Belfast, the big smoke, from Derry. I already subscribed to a couple of the US SF magazines but this was something new to me, British SF orientated and very much like a new New Worlds (though it was some years before I saw any NWs and made the connection) This was something local, (an SF magazine? from Northern Ireland?) but punching well above its weight. I hunted down the other issues eagerly and was upset to find there were only three in total. Later though, we did get the full story of why that was when we met him at the Belfast SF group in the Monico bar and despite (because?) of his acerbic wit it was only natural that we would have him as a fan quest of honour at NICON 88. We didn't see much of him after that (hopefully not because of his con experience) but when Eurocon came to Belfast in 2019 it was only natural that Tommy and I should touch base with him for our history of NI fandom project. Prior to dragging him along to the con itself we met for a pub lunch to get some background intel and it was like old times in the Monico again. When he got to the con it was the same stories we'd heard before but told the way he did that didn't matter. When you go to see Dylan or Van Morrison you don't want their new material, you want the classics. We were sure this would be the start of dragging him back to the new SF group in the Errigle but alas fate in the form of the pandemic and his ongoing ill-health meant otherwise. So here's to Paul, you may have only played a small part in the pantheon of fandom, but for some of us it was a very important part so let me raise a pint to you oul' haund.” (**Eugene Doherty**)

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*TF: The end came swift, what happened? PC: “The bank manager left, promoted or demoted. His replacement had a religious bent — science fiction was satanic. Distributors issued returned notices on magazines which had not been returned, and I took a hit and couldn’t be arsed anymore.”*

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