

DIB DIB DIB

39



TRASK TAKES TRENDY  
TUNES TO TASK (pio)

Now that you've exhausted yourself by ripping open the envelope (probably breaking a fingernail in the process), you can at last sit back, relax, and read your favourite postal games zine... yes, Dib Dib Dib 39 has arrived. A monthly (roughly) magazine, organ, tome (whatever) catering solely for those who like their wit/humour mixed up with good reading, tasteful presentation, games, and not costing more than 35p per issue. This is where Dib comes in: Costs 35p an issue exactly, UK rates; 45p to Europe (unless it's overweight); and still a small bloody fortune to America. Comes to you from Tom Tweedy, living at 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks, HP7 9BD. Tel. 02403 4513

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#### EDITORIAL

What a start to this issue! I've had everything except a couple of games typed up for the last sodding week - earlier than I've ever been before - and what happens; we end up with a sodding Postal strike from the Wednesday leading up to the deadline, until the following Monday! I had to ring everyone I had no orders for.... and that was only if I had a number for them. I warned you all before; sometimes there IS a need for me to contact you by phone. Thankfully the strike didn't last long so I didn't have to hold any games over - but it was touch and go there for a bit for a least 6 games.

The postal dispute hasn't been quite settled yet, and it's likely it could blow up all over again. So please, if you don't want me to have your phone number, then check with me to see if your orders are in. Better still, try and get them in early.

Now, before I start anything else, a warm welcome to all the new subscribers Dib has picked up over the past couple of issues. If I haven't been in contact personally, and you've asked for information, please remind me again - what with the rush and my bad memory I can't really be held at fault for forgetting the hundred and one things people are likely to ask me.

One of the things people keep asking me is, when am I going to start another Sopwith game. At the moment I don't have a Sopwith Waiting List because I'm running more games than I already care to (I just don't have any more spare time). However, a couple of people have offered to GM games for me. This will take some of the pressure off me of course, so I may well take them up on their offer at some later date. I certainly won't be starting another until one of the present games has finished. I suggest if someone is desperate enough to want a game now, then write to Richard Morris, 1 Highland Ville, Lightcliffe, Halifax, W. Yorks, HX3 8AG - who is the hobby's Sopwith Statistician and used to run the Sopwith CGS. (Actually Pete Tamlyn needs one more player in The Acolyte I see....) Still, if anyone just wants a copy of the postal rules and map from me, please let me know.

Meanwhile, what's happening to me, I hear you ask. Well not much really. I made another journey up to the Arabian Stud Farm in Lincolnshire two weeks ago. Not a bad trip up this time; things looked a mite better, well, not so gloomy with all the spring flowers out. They sort of softened the close, uncomfortable feeling of the dykes somewhat. A good day was had by all, with yours truly quaffing nearly a whole bottle of one of the better quality Bern Kastels; dining on an excellent meal of roast lamp; and finishing off with gallons of coffee during the afternoon, with selected bits of a chinese meal in the evening. Coming home it must be said, that I was feeling quite dozy, and pleasantly stuffed. Good job I don't have too many days like that, or my manly figure might just end up being a little too manly.

The only other thing of note, is my involvement in the Ode 42eme Top Ten Invitational game. In which I'm supposed to be playing against the best Diplomacy players the hobby has to offer. Blackguards the lot of them mind you, but I have to admit, there's one or two nifty players. My only complaint is I have the treacherous Mike Close as a neighbouring Russia close to my innocent, vulnerable, and beloved Turkey. Better I should have cut off my right hand instead. Any man would have cried out for a better deal, it's not enough that he

will turn the very heavens against me. But I shall prevail in the end never fear; I have the easy-going Walkerdine playing Italy, who, if his Jotto playing is anything to go by, will fold easily under any subtle pressure from the infamous Rob Chapman playing England. Who's bound to get into TYS by Autumn 1902 before anyone can stop him. Looks like it's gonna be a tough game...

It seems I made a mistake in regards pricing the Roneo Contact Sheets in the last issue of Dib. Well, I didn't exactly, Jan did. She told me they cost 10p a sheet; and as they come in a box of 100, I naturally assumed I had paid £10 per box. Oh how wrong I was... I in fact paid £20 per box! And here was I selling them for 10p a sheet to all and sundry! I've sent some to Konrad Dolata, Pete Tamlyn, Richard Morris and John Webley already - so there has been quite a lot of interest. It's a good job I found out now.

Anyway, the cost of future sheets is 20p per sheet + postage. If you want to just try some, or you don't feel like paying out for a whole box, just write to me. That, or you can write to my supplier direct. If so, ask for Tim Doouss (if you ring) he knows all about them. If you prefer to write, the address is: Tim Doouss, Harrow Business Services, 7 Love Lane, Pinner, Missx., HA5 3BE. Tel. 01 868 3301/5756. And what you ask for is: Roneo Contact Sheets, Item No. 42354. Tell Tim I sent you.

[NOTE: I've just found a new Kores stencil with a plastic sheet already attached to the front, at the same price as ordinary stencils - is this a new idea for printwheels? I'm trying them now to see how they turn out without contact sheets - judge for yourself. I'm keeping my fingers crossed.]

I received a copy of The Guilder edited by William Whyte the other day - actually, for the second time. William sent one in time for me to review in Dib 38 but I forgot because I rushed trying to get the zine out on time. So, what's it like? It's a little difficult for me to give it any fair judgement actually; for a 1st issue it was certainly better than Dib's first issue; it's quite scruffy - I could hardly read any of it - but that's no problem as format and presentation often pick up after editors gain experience and become more familiar with their duplicators. It's also very FRP/D&D orientated (something I don't have much experience in), although William is trying to change all that by breaking into the Diplomacy/games hobby. TG costs 40p per issue, is 16 pages long, and has game reviews, book reviews, hobby news, and game openings for Diplomacy. The only real gripe I had with it was the two staples down the page in booklet form. I much prefer the single corner staple in A4 mimeo zines. I wish TG the best of luck with what appears to be a good start. Anyone interested in Traveller, D&D, Hexacapture (Hexawot?) and seeing new zines should give it a try. It's certainly different. Write to:-  
William Whyte, 215 Upper Lisburn Road, Finaghy, Belfast, BT10 0LL.

While I'm on the subject of zines, I see Steve Norledge's zine Rapscallion has made a very smooth shift over from litho to mimeo production; issue 6 sported the title Crapstallion with an excellent drawing of something that can only be described as a minatour without horns sat on a loo farting ('Poot', Steve?) - a superb, and very neat-looking zine. Damn Norledge, but I think Rap looks even better than Dib and he's only just started using the mimeo format! Don't know the cost, but has 38 A4 pages and has enough game openings to make you sick, of Dragonsong (exactly like Sopwith only with dragons instead of planes), Excalibur, Diplomacy, Soccerleague, The Prisoner, Circus Maximus and Downfall. The only thing I don't like about it is the very unnecessary sub-zine tacked on the back, run by David Messenger of Oink fame. All in all though, and I hate to say it, I really do recommend this rubbish bit of tat from the stables of (get it? Crapstallion? Oh never mind):-  
Steve Norledge, 75 Hawkhurst Way, W. Wickham, Kent, BR4 9PE.

ZINE POLL COMPETITION: Yep, ready to jump on any bandwagon, I've come up with an excellent idea (not that I get many ideas you understand) of getting a preview, perhaps some inkling, of who, and what, is likely to win this year's Zine Poll well before it happens. All I want you to do is send in what you think will be in the first five placings, as I did last issue - in the correct order! My

guesses were: Mad Policy, Greatest Hits, Dolchstoss, Acolyte, Hopscotch. Gamefee is 25p, with the winner taking all that's collected after the results of the Zine Poll have been published. I'll be printing the results/guesses as they come in as an added interest. Can YOU guess the first five placings correctly? If so, send them in to me.

And, as an added reminder, don't forget the Zine Poll '84 Deadline: Thursday, July 19th 1984. All votes for the Poll must be sent to: Richard Walkerdine, 144 Stoughton Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 6PG:

[Well damn me! Hopscotch just turned up today with this very same idea for a Zine Poll game in it. Apparently Alan (Parr) ran the game last year. I dimly remember something about it (you must remember, I tend to forget what happened yesterday, never mind last bloody year), but had simply forgotten. Still, it's the only idea I'm likely to get and I'm sticking to it. No-way am I scratching the above. At least I offer a prize!]

Oops, back onto zines (well Hobby Service zines actually). The latest Diplomacy Quarterly from the hobby's Diplomacy Statistician, Pete Calcrafft, has just turned up. Another good issue, giving all the latest Boardman Numbers, a little chat, letters, who owns what computer in the hobby (by the way Pete; I don't own a Dragon. I have an Apple II+ linked to my daisywheel with 2 disk drives, and a BBC B), his latest Diplomacy Ratings System, an Openings Survey, The Finishing Touch (Diplomacy endgames and who won them), and In the Beginning (latest game openings). Good value for money for those interested in Diplomacy. Costs seem a little complicated, if Pete keeps changing things around, being 11p per section + 17p postage. Normally 4 sections per issue. Pete Calcrafft, 25 Garners Lane, Davenport, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 8SD. Tel. 061 483 3604.

Also just turned up is the latest 20 Years On from Mark Billenness. Mark made quite a good job taking over from his brother, Simon, with this zine register. The whole issue was done on Mark's BBC B computer, which should make the job of editing and storage of such a zine a lot easier; plus making the information more reliable for us. A neat looking job for a dot-matrix printer, though lacking the pictorial polish that Simon seemed to give it making full use of the litho capabilities at his disposal. No need to advertise this here as I always print it in Dibs and Drabs at the back. My congratulations to Mark for a smooth takeover though.

JOTTO: I've decided (another good idea?) I'd like to run another game of this. The last two games were so popular, and because other zines seem to be starting it back up again I thought, why not... So, all those interested in playing another Jotto game in Dib should get their names in for next issue. No gamefee, and the prize for the winner is 3 free issue of Dib. The rules are quite simple:-

I choose six words from the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, each six letters long. Each month you send in one word and I then score each letter against each of my six words. For instance, if you submitted DETOUR and the six secret words were: RESORT, BASKET, GENTLE, PRIEST, MORTAR, BOTTLE the scores would be: 4, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3 respectively. Obvious aim is to find all six words.

When you think you know all six words you may take a guess at them (you must guess all six) - but you must get ALL six right! Get one wrong and you're out. Anagrams of the secret words are accepted. If you want to play then send in 3 words/guesses to start things off for next issue. And that's all there is to it...

Just this little space at the bottom. These stencils seem to be cutting okay so far. The only complaint I can find with them is that the plastic sheet is easily caught on the platen rollers when feeding through - which won't help the 'torn stencils' complaint from one user of printwheels in GH.

THE MAKING OF HOBBY HISTORY (or, Legends in Our Time)  
Memoirs of the Godlike, John 'Pryderi' Piggott

Well, young 'un, when you've been in the hobby as long as I have (14 years) I hope your past indiscretions will keep catching up with you! I refer, of course, to the Nationwide televised Diplomacy game, and my own shameful appearance therein.

This started as a perfectly normal game - Courier 71/9, as I recall. I was playing England, and Graeme Levin (he of the bankrupt retail empire) was France. The headed notepaper belonged to the Russian player, one Peter Robertson ('Petrovitch Robertsonoff - Tsar of all the Russias'); in fact, although he didn't do well in the game, he hung on until about 1908, long enough to exhaust his special paper, after which he wrote on ordinary lined paper and signed himself the 'revolutionary' 'Count Nostrebor'.

Anyway, the game lumbered on until by 1910 Graeme had at last got the better of me in our game-long alliance - well, it was a pretty secure alliance by Graeme's normal standards, as he stabbed me only every other move - and I was down to three units. The Nationwide people got involved almost by accident; Graeme was seeking publicity for his first games shop and for Games and Puzzles magazine, and I think he just mentioned postal games to them in passing. But they had just improved their arrangements for regional studios so that, for the first time, material from the regions could be transmitted live over the network. It occurred to one of their junior producers that this postal game, with players living in various far-flung parts of Britain, provided a splendid opportunity to use this new facility.

And so, on 4th April 1974, I found myself travelling the 60 miles from Oxford to Birmingham in an ageing taxi paid for by the BBC. On arrival at Pebble Mill Studios, I was directed to the 'bus shelter' where I was offered a drink of... tea! (The official name for the 'bus shelter' is the 'hospitality room' - something it became only when I sternly demanded whisky and some was brought.) Across the country others were on their way to BBC studios - one to Plymouth, one to Bristol and one to Edinburgh. Graeme Levin was in London.

Came six o'clock and in we went to the studio. First I had to sit quietly for half an hour, with my Diplomacy board set up on a picnic table in front of me, while Tom Coyne read the regional news and introduced other 'Midlands Today' items. At last the big moment arrived. Graeme burred on knowledgeably for a few minutes to Sue Lawley, face to face in the London studio, mainly about his great plans for selling games and how this was a growing market. Then he outlined the strategy he'd used in our own Diplomacy game. Finally Sue Lawley said, 'Well, let's go to John Piggott in our Birmingham studio - what did you feel when France attacked you?'

This was the stab. You have heard about people seeming tongue-tied and frozen in front of the TV cameras? That is how I appeared. Yet it was not quite like that - I had my answer prepared; I had even been briefed about the questions which might be asked. What happened was this: In front of me was a monitor - an ordinary black-and-white TV set with the sound turned off. The sound came to me through an earplug. Thus I could see and hear what was going on. What no-one had told me was that there was a second or so's delay on these, and as I started to say my piece I heard my own voice coming back at me through the hearing aid - a second or so out of synch! I stumbled over my words, thinking that some other idiot was trying to speak at the same time as me...

I recovered eventually, of course. But the magic had departed from the occasion, and when, a month later, I received my cheque for five guineas, this marked the end of my glittering career as a famous TV personality. A short time afterward I became a civil servant.

Well, Tom, you asked for this and by heaven you've got it! I trust the above will satisfy the curious for the next few years at least.

THE CATACOMBS OF COPERNICA  
A Postal AD&D Game by Chris Sandow.

Turns Seven - Nine

SIR GUY DEWAYE (Derek Andrews)

With the help of a "Charm Person" spell Sir Guy has gained the co-operation of the captured pirate, and has learnt a lot of highly useful information. What's more, they have now been led to the pirate's den, where Sir Guy was hoping to dupe the pirate-leader into treating them as allies. Unfortunately the wily captain of the pirates has a trick or two up his sleeve - like a gypsy-girl who can read minds! And the captain has just introduced the girl to Sir Guy....

AINA-AMARTH (Nick Clark)

While exploring the corridors in their area of the dungeon, the paladin and his companions found a room which appeared empty, but from which sounds could be heard. Jumping to the conclusion that there was an invisible creature (or creatures) in the room they threw in an improvised Molotov Cocktail - only to discover that the room (or, to be more precise, the floor of the room) was not quite how it appeared...

RANDOLPH THE RANGER (Dave Tant)

At present, Randolph and Co. are exploring a room which is affected by a peculiar dimness (like a 'Darkness' spell that is only partially working). So far they have discovered a gong, two candles, and a large door-shaped mirror - all of which they are treating with understandable and commendable caution...

CADELLIN SILVERBROW (Simon Craddock)

In hot pursuit of the troll which they bumped into last time, they have now come across the said troll's owner; an eccentric and somewhat paranoid individual, to say the least...

THORN (George North)

Led (sort of!) by Erasmus, and accompanied by the sage's gnomish side-kick and kobold guards (the combination of gnomes and kobolds is making Thorn decidedly suspicious of the whole set-up!), Thorn and his party are off in search of treasure - treasure which is supposed to be protected by many lethal traps, two of which they have already discovered. Erasmus knew how to avoid one trap, and he knew the nature of the other one (involving a pit of spikes to be crossed, with an invisible barrier at the other side - nasty, eh?), so that Thorn was able to find a safe way across. But from here on Erasmus is as ignorant of what's in store for them as Thorn is. They're on their own now...

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT...IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT...IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT...IMPORTA

The Catacombs of Copernica are now ready to be opened to two more players, and as far as I can see, the next two on the waiting list are:-

Victor Hall  
John Boogert

If you could write to me, letting me know whether or not you are still interested in entering, and, if you are, enclosing the £3 game fee required. I will then send you the introductory booklet (Second Edition).

It's always interesting to hear another person's view on the game of Diplomacy; even when it comes from someone who professes to dislike the game, on the grounds that it makes enemies and not friends. This next article/letter was sparked off from Rob Chapman's excellent piece a couple of issues ago. Unfortunately I didn't get time to print it last issue - much as I tried - so now, for your perusal, we have....

ANOTHER MAN'S LOOK AT THE GAME OF DIPLOMACY  
from George North.

I very much enjoyed Rob Chapman's account of how to win at Diplomacy. Between you and me I think he is probably about right in every respect, but just for fun I thought we might look at the system for possible snags and a slightly different view-point. First we are told we must organise all available information about each game. Some kind of filing system is required, and in Rob's case it is a folder. Several folders each with the name of the GM and players, and their respective telephone numbers and addresses. Well, with me it was shoe boxes.

Unfortunately even shoe boxes didn't hold much and soon it was two or three shoe boxes for each game until I had shoes for every day of the week and Peg was beginning to wonder about me. The easiest method was to keep the nice friendly letters and tear up the nasty Richard Sharp ones and forget all about them.

Keeping a record of each game brings its own problems. All right for rich people with photocopiers, of course, but when you live in the wilds of Essex you have to improvise. My ploy is to use two ceiling tiles, cut to size and wrapped in green beize taken from the local billiard tables. Then you pin your map of Europe on the green beize with drawing pins. To keep a check on the position I borrow Peg's multi-coloured dress pins and use one colour for each player. You have to remember which are fleets and which are armies though, and that can be a problem. It is no good having an army in the Dead Sea and a fleet in Munich, now is it? But the solution was bits of paper on the fleets and not on the armies. Or, as I discovered later when the bits of paper kept coming off, you can use light and dark colours making up to fourteen different coloured pins all told, but it works fine if you have a good memory and it is easy enough to remember that the black and the brown colours are Turkey and the white and yellow ones are England, and stuff like that. Works fine until wifey wants to do a bit of sewing with the Russian Fleet at St. Peter's Port.  
((Note to Novices, re the estimable George North, he is, it is sad to say, strangely absent from the jovial cut and thrust of contemporary Diplomacy life. Perhaps within these few lines the reason will become apparent...))

I agree entirely with never NMRing and to this end one must bombard the GM with several different sets of orders and he will choose a jolly good set and help no end. In any case if you send in several sets of orders and your plans become unstuck and you didn't support France into Marseille you can always blame the stupid GM for not understanding your change of instructions. Games Masters love to become involved in actual play and you will have a friend for life.

Write lots of letters says Rob, and again he is right on the button. Only put stamps on letters sent to allies though, or it will cost you a bomb. Write about other stuff than Diplomacy - that is the secret of much success. Only you get some funny people around. I once got a letter from a German after I stabbed him, and it was all jolly and friendly like you would never believe. It went on for three and a half foolscap pages before Germany told France that it wasn't very nice to move into Munch, but it was only a game. This player went on to talk about 'EnGarde' and how he had this tough character's name, 'Noah Speke de English' who could smash anybody in a duel, and then he reminded me how my character 'Tuffas la Custard' wasn't doing very good. I am still trying to work out whether this was telling me to get the Hell out of Munich or it would be the worse for Tuffas, or whether it was all in the mind at this end!

Stay friendly with everyone? Now there is a problem if ever I saw one. At this

very moment I am being torn apart wondering whether I must support Russia into Norway or support Austria into Warsaw with my German units. Either way I make at least one enemy. How to choose? I spin a coin and support Austria into Warsaw and the Russian is mad. Then I build a fleet and an army and both Austria and England are on me like a ton of bricks because I didn't build the other way. Write grovelling apologies seems to be the order of the day, and hate the lot of them. I never found a friendly Diplomacy player yet that didn't want a million supports and promises not to leave your home bases until 1908. Except me, of course.

The last paragraph of Rob's article is the honest truth of it. Keep a low profile. With only five units by 1907, how much lower can you get? On the other hand we already had two players drop out and the odds are getting better all the time. In the very first game I ever played I kept a low profile. I am a new boy, claimed the Englishman, and us new boys should stick together. I fall for anything. That new boy edits Walamalaysia Gazette and was a seasoned veteran with low cunning. And in that same game I got a letter from Turkey who said we could not very well help each other, but perhaps we could exchange notes and stir things up a bit. That Austrian did not keep a low profile and Russia, Austria and Italy ((?)) had him out in 1903, so it just goes to show that Rob Chatman ((sic)) knows what he is talking about. Probably more than you can say for me, but there you are.

LETTERS.

And so begins another award-winning column... but what's this...

GEORGE NORTH:

"Hey Tweedy,

Who you calling undesirable? Let me tell you my wife likes me, the fat bit down the road like me, the cat doesn't mind me although, admitted, it does not exactly go into raptures, the next door neighbour's dog also likes me a little bit.

I suggest you explain yourself in next month's Dib Dib Dib or I'll get Mike Close to hold you down while I come and sit on your head. You won't like that much. ((You could well be right there))

Undesirable indeed! You have already ruined a good game of Jotto, and now you threaten to spoil an award-winning letter column. You won't get far if you toady to the likes of... but you know who without me mentioning names."

((There is a wealth of difference (and distance) between 'like' and 'desirable', George. We all like you, but do we desire you? Good grief, I can't bear thinking about it, I'll have to go for a lie down. The thought of a rapturous cat is bad enough.

But, you're right, you've spotted it, I have been toadying to the likes of Clifton and Mike Close long enough... no more! Can I have my award-winning letter column back now?))

oo000oo

I guess not 'cos now it's.....

MIKE CLOSE:

"The people are right - your lettercol is becoming far too serious - you haven't had a George North letter for ages now. What's happened? George stopped writing them (improbable) or have you stopped opening them (much more likely)? ((You kidding? - he disguises his name now!))

Let's put a stop to these music and computer discussions and talk/write about something much more interesting - for example - weird and wonderful collections. Now I'm sure that you regard collecting milk bottles as weird, but this is just the top of iceberg!



Now I know for a fact that George North collects postmen. He takes it as a personal affront when they don't bring him any letters that he walks down the street after them and drags them inside his house. This entirely explains why the GPO regard Romford as the Bermuda Triangle of the Mail Industry.

You want some more? Consider this - there are 50 or 60 extremely silly people who have a collection of Dib Dib Dib's building up in a drawer or file. And I can tell you why. If you hang them up in the toilet they don't last five weeks, and all the print comes off on your bum. ((Ah, but fine-quality print!))

I shall now turn over this subject (of weird collections) to the fertile minds of Martin Allen and Cathy Cuning.

((And not before time either - this letter alone should lose me at least half a dozen serious subscribers. I don't bother collecting anything myself - I would like to collect guns, but Jan won't allow it because of the expense. She herself collects buddas; she has a whole wall full of them: Jade-type ones, bronze, wood, porcelain, plaster, brass - most except silver, gold or glass. The thing is, it's customary when having one of these things in the house to put money underneath them; it's bad luck otherwise. I tell you, I've got half my bank balance under these things!))

oo000oo

BILL HAYGARTH:

"Not content with the 7 day turnaround of the last issue ((37)) you manage 6 with this one! Incredible - you mustn't spoil us too much or we'll come to expect this all the time."

((You have a point there, Bill. Still, I thought I always spoilt (spoiled?) my subscribers, by the very fact that I always send them Dib ?))

oo000oo

MARTYN IVES:

"As I have never been in the Army I would not know about people's parts being offered, because us Royal Marines have no need to wait for an offer, it goes without saying! As my friend Fiona Richmond said to me a couple of years ago...

"Hello", I knew what she meant though. ((Complete the quote, Ives, what she REALLY said was, "Hello... what's this then?"...))

On to Music: All of the people who write to you about music never mention COUNTRY MUSIC, what's wrong with a bit of Johnny Cash or Waylon Jennings now and then, or Willie Nelson come to that?

I think it's about time for me to be stood up, propped against a wall and counted, I cannot be the only country music fan amongst your vast list of subbers. What about old Cathy Sneaky, she lives 'over there' (what a good name for a song).

Must stop now, my wife has come home and I have to hide my copy of Dib under the pillow. She doesn't know you see."

((Yes, I quite like a little country music now and again. Crystal Gayle (is that how to spell it?), Boxcar Willie, Tony Joe White, John Denver and suchlike are favourites that spring to mind. (I have records only of the last two.) Johnny Cash can grate a little at times because most of his songs sound much the same. Trouble is, not being a dedicated Country & Western fan, I never go to any of the concerts and rarely buy the records - so good songs/tunes suddenly come to mind only when I leave the radio or TV on. Pity really as country music is mostly the light kind of mood I like.))

oo000oo

PETE MASON:

"I didn't know if I've mentioned it before, but I do like the way you run your games. I'm new to the hobby, and before I knew any better, I started a game in that man Sharp's zine. He runs his games in the most irritating manner, by

commenting in detail on how individuals in the game are doing. This has so far resulted in two or three stabs to my knowledge, and we're only up to 1903. Italy for instance has been severely set back after a good start, as a direct result of Richard's ruining of the game. Press is one thing, but what he's doing is quite another.

Enough" moans. Your way of doing things: friendly jibes and comments is much better."

((Yes, I do know the problem here, having been on the receiving end myself. One of my first ever games was in Dolchstoss, and I just couldn't at first believe the comments Richard was coming out with. At times it was downright difficult trying to sneak up on some poor unsuspecting sot with Richard giving reasons for my every move. I felt a bit like that poor luckless coyote in the Road Runner Show! Of course, Richard's argument is he's only pointing out what everyone else in the game could easily spot. Well, this is not quite true, as you have well gathered. More often than not he'd get the wrong idea and suggest I was about to do something or other, when in fact I'd decided to go the other way entirely. This had the predictable effect of turning someone I'd thought I'd left safely behind, against me, leaving me the prospect of having to pull back my units to protect myself or get stabbed. His comments don't have very amusing results at times, I know, but in retrospect they can often be quite funny. I would have said, fortunately this game was rescued by Chris Tringham's Megalomania, but, there are those who could never understand the agony of Chris GMing a game. It's something akin to sawing one's head off with a blunt frying pan while reading a copy of Tolstoy's War & Peace.

The book of Diplomacy Richard wrote was very entertaining indeed, as he can be an interesting writer.... unfortunately, he's not a very good Diplomacy player (if one is talking in standards of winning games as being 'good'). To my knowledge he's never even won a game, yet there's some who use his book as a bible. A strange state of affairs. But the fact of the matter is, being good at Diplomacy doesn't automatically mean one can write a book about the game. Out of the Top Ten players in this country, in my opinion the only one who could possibly make a good enough job of writing about the game, would be Rob Chapman.))

oo000oo

MIKE DEANS:

"I must agree with Steve Norledge regarding today's Pop Music. It has become very image-orientated, almost to the exclusion of the music, but, as he points out, there are always a few who continue to present good music for the masses.

I would disagree with Larry's attitude to the means of modern music. Surely the 'batteries of gadgets, technicians and amplifiers' perform exactly the same function as violins etc? Are you trying to say there is less skill in playing an electric guitar than a traditional acoustic guitar? ((Not me... Larry)) Or in controlling two or three keyboard synthesizers than a piano? However, I would freely admit that many (perhaps most?) groups take this mega-wattage right over the top, and seem merely to be attempting to deafen their audiences.

Whilst my own music taste might be open to criticism ("riff, riff, chugga, riff, KRRANNGG", quote, Peter 'I never said that' Mearns, 1979), I like to think that I can appreciate most forms of music, including classical and pop. But, like everything else in this world, it is up to the individual to sort out the dross from the good stuff."

((And the man himself.....))

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LARRY TRASK:

"When I first came to this country many years ago, I found British cuisine to be -- how shall I put this? -- disappointing. Curiously, all my British acquaintances assured me repeatedly that there was excellent British cooking to be had, while agreeing in the same breath that the food that one actually

encountered in any given location was pretty awful. I was finally forced to the conclusion that excellent British cooking was prepared by Mrs Ethel Stargs of Saffron Walden on July 29th, 1953, but not before or since, and that this memorable occasion was what all my well-meaning friends had in mind.

More recently I have been intimating in print that so-called 'pop-music' is rather -- and again I shall choose my words carefully -- unrewarding. Your readers, and others, have sprung to the defence of this odd pastime with some heat -- but what a strange defence they have mounted! Andrew Smith, for example, in an entire foolscap page, has no better point to make than that pop musicians enjoy themselves, unless you count his astonishing argument that pop performers can "capture the popular image" by achieving new heights of inanity! Derek Andrews appears to concur, claiming that "music is a disposable commodity" and admitting cheerfully that the pop music of a few years is now utterly without value, while intimating that the same fate is in store for the current output. (Er, um, yes, Derek, quite, but tell me, in what sense is this a DEFENCE of pop music? An unbiased observer might have considered it a DISMISSAL.) But it is Steve Norledge who brings to mind my first paragraph by characterizing pop music generally as "chaos" and "pure rubbish", while still insisting that here and there in the noxious effluvium of pop that there is the odd pearl to be found. This is precisely the line I've been getting from most apologists for the pop racket, from Birks on down: that pop is IN PRINCIPLE wonderful stuff, even though all the pop that actually gets blared at me from morning till night is admittedly unredeemed garbage, to be considered to outer darkness with that most awful condemnation known to HOMO POPAUDIENS: "chart stuff". Well, after years of having this line fed to me, I have come to the conclusion that excellent pop music was performed by Mrs Starg's son Walter one rainy afternoon in Fulham in the late 60's, but that unfortunately no recording apparatus was available, and hence that my chances of hearing excellent pop are roughly akin to my chances of eating excellent British food.

Finally Andrew, a word. It is not true that I am opposed to "musical or cultural development or advance". But pop is no part of the musical tradition, a tradition in which earlier work does not become valueless merely because new ideas have been promulgated. Pop belongs entirely to the empty and meretricious tradition of fashion, a tradition in which we do what we do because that's what we're doing at that moment, and for no other earthly reason. The musical tradition continues today, unnoticed by the proponents of pop, much as the tradition of literature continues without the services of Mr Harold Robbins and his kind. And as for my supposed opposition to LINGUISTIC advance -- well, that deserves a letter in itself, but I'll content myself with pointing out that there's a vast difference between the deliberate and purposeful manipulations of a Homer or a Hopkins and the ignorant fumbings of a clot who's not too sure what his words mean or even whether they rhyme."

((How the hell is it an American has the gall to find British cuisine disappointing? - my God, a native from the land of the hamburger, gallon of ice cream, chilli-dogs and other fast food widow-makers. I'll admit, a lot of British food can be trash, but that's the fault of the cook, not the food/dish itself. I have to say it (and there's quite a few will back me up: Pete Mearns, Garry Piper, etc) but my wife is an excellent cook. When she cooks good solid traditional British dishes like, Roast Beef & Yorkshire pudding (with the Yorkshires light and fluffy), Roast Pork and apple, Toad in the Hole, Liver and Onions, Steak & Kidney pie/pudding, Shepherd's Pie and suchlike, I defy anyone to equal her. And this is apart from her other cooking. Mind you, I do get a little irritated when she keeps burning the toast. It's something she just cannot get used to.

It's my guess, Larry, that you've either been unlucky with your cook/chief, or most likely you dislike the English style of food. Some people find it too stodgy, and perhaps this I can understand.))

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STEVE NORLEDGE:

"Why should symbolism smack of power to the critics? Only if you are so easily lead as to be incapable of independent judgement of art. Evaluation of

art is always subjective - bollocks to the critics ((nice objective statement, Steve.)) Whatever they say, your opinion is equally valid - don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Similarly so, art will have different symbolisms for different people.

You are quite right in saying that people should be able to judge whether they like something or not independently, so why shouldn't they similarly be able to form their own impressions of what the picture means to them. I'm sure that given any particular piece of art - there would be at least some divergence in what the thing means to us. Just as our tastes might differ as well.

As to the value of symbolisms. Well, again, it's personal. I do enjoy analysing paintings to find out what the painter was trying to say - and my interpretations would differ from everyone else's. I don't believe that symbolism should be totally ignored, there are some paintings with such obvious symbolic elements that a great deal may be lost through ignoring them. Some examples: "The Crutch" in many of Salvadore Dali's paintings. And there are countless others.

On another tack, does it really rather that modern music uses electrical power and gadgetry? Does it really? Surely, it is the end result that is important - the end, not the means? If you like something, if you enjoy it, does it matter that the musicians use amplifiers and synthesisers?

And of course amplifications is necessary. Pop music is intended to be enjoyed, join in, dance, make noise, Not just out there coldly analysing what you hear. People seem to enjoy themselves this way (if you do not, Larry, fair enough - but that doesn't invalidate it as I'm sure you'll agree) and so the bands need to be able to make themselves heard. And don't forget, orchestras have huge numbers of people playing compared with rock/pop bands..."

((Well, there's nothing I can add to this.... I agree. Music, like pictorial or any other form of art is entirely personal. People get, or see, what they want to into any piece they care to - and that's how it should be. I wonder why, then, knowing how others are reluctant to change, why people like to talk about it?))

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IAIN FORSYTH: (South Africa)

"Good for the English rugby team; deciding to tour South Africa and thumbing their noses at those who attempt to restrict the actions and choices of others in the name of freedom a democracy. Sport should be kept above political bickering and double standards. It has always proved an ineffectual political weapon and the seedy rabble who attempt to use it as such should be booted into touch."

((Well I must say this subject doesn't crop up very often in zines. But I do so agree, Iain, however, because the fuss of this year's Olympics, I do feel that officially Britain should pull out as well. I mean it's such a farce now, isn't it? Mind you, when I say officially, I mean that the British Government should disassociate itself from it. If athletes themselves still want to go, then it should be entirely up to them.))

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GIL VON GAVEL:

"You seem to be having trouble with numbers (you also managed to skip issue 34, I heard): Well, if you need some extra tuition in elementary maths, I'd be only too happy to help you (for a few free DIBs obviously).

However nobody's perfect, when I wrote "DIB 39" in my last letter - referring to Konrad's letter - I actually meant "31". I don't know how that happened. Could you please send me a copy of Konrad's letter in DIB 33, if you can do it? ((I don't have the original, Gil, why not ask Konrad?))

To wargames, of course one plays them in order to use one's brain to think up tactics, strategies, and get the satisfaction (or not as the case may be) of executing them and watching them succeed. But I still think it's all a matter of fun. As to whether wargames condition people into thinking that war is harmless