

GREATEST

HITS

VOLUME

TEN

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This is the last page being typed, and consequently I can reveal that my duplicator has bugged it self up again, and so I have had to bring the stencils back to University. If pages 15 to 18 are unreadable, I'm sorry, but blame the duplicator, not me. To top it all, I'm using a grotty typewriter which insists on doublespacing every other letter, thus cutting my speed down to ten words a minute. God, life can get on top of you at times. Finally, don't bother 'phoning 01-735-4220 in the next fortnight, because I won't be there. Canterbury is very nice when the sun is shining.

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DEATH TO ALL  
FROGS!

This is GREATEST HITS Vol. TEN, Produced by Pete Birks, of 39 Handforth Road, London, SW9 0LL, ENGLAND. GREATEST HITS costs one-third of a p a side (a cent a side to Yanks), and is meant to be produced once every three weeks.

Once upon a time there was a silly boy who produced a Diplomacy zine. This silly boy owned a silly duplicator, which tended to go mad at the most awkward time, i.e. in the middle of duplicating. So the silly little boy had to take his zine back to University to get it duplicated, which cost lots and lots of money, and also resulted in the silly little zine being late (or early if you only receive Dolchstoss and Bellicus).

That, in a paragraph, is what happened last issue. Come Sunday night, I was printing page sixteen when the duplicator started pouring out ink, on the floor, me, itself, and worst of all, on page sixteen, which was quite unreadable. The stencil was soaking, so I couldn't take it back with me to Canterbury, and therefore nobody got the results of the Isaac Asimov quiz. This, along with Duncan Rigden's review, and whatever else was on pages fifteen and sixteen are all around somewhere. Damned Duplicators, Grrrrr.

Well, the elections will soon be upon us, unless there are not enough candidates. My manifesto for the post of regular diplomacy secretary is somewhere around page Four. Please vote, even if it isn't for me. Figlet is going for General Secretary, Tony Ball will probably be treasurer again, whilst the only Dippy candidates I know of are me, Sharp, Doubleday, and Holt. If I do get on, I shall be putting forward some proposals that would mean changes in the NGC, consisting of, I am afraid, higher prices. I am saying this now because I feel that it would be dishonest to say otherwise just so that I would get elected.

Dolchstoss at last worked its weary way to my postbox, with the interesting news that Richard Sharp is not standing again, thus meaning that Dolchstoss will revert to being a normal NGC zine of no more stature than Greatest Hits. Oh how the mighty are fallen.

I must confess that my time at University is becoming far more enjoyable now that I am living in college and do not have any exams on my back (don't you envy me Adrien?). So much so, in fact, that I am only coming back to London to produce GH or work in the Bookie's. Every night there seems to be a party of some sort or another, and my friend's birthday last Tuesday resulted in someone drinking 11 vodka and limes in half an hour! (I drank seven gin and tonics in the same period, and the results of that were so embarrassing that I dare not recount them here. I didn't throw up, though.

Now that Chelsea have been relegated, West Ham have won the F.A. Cup, and England have won the home championship, life seems to be slightly bereft of meaning. At this moment I am watching the incredibly boring Essex vs. Glamorgan, and it strikes me what a poor team Essex are, nowhere near Surrey in quality. How does Walkerdine support them?

By the time you read this the results of the Referendum will be known, and I predict a 54-46% vote. This should be the beginning of a falling off of the political comment in GH. I hope to concentrate more on Diplomacy articles, reprinted from American Dippy zines. Especially interesting are Eric Verheiden's stalemate articles, which say a lot about defensive positions.

Science Fiction, of course, will continue on its powerful way, as will the quizzes. I hope that this will be what you, the readers, want. Not that I care a damn.

As for zines, Misteimer is now photocopied game reports only. Frigate has yet to appear. Fifth Column is ceasing to be plagued by 'forgeritis', and Richard Scott is throwing accusations all over the place. Well I know who did it, but I ain't saying.

DesConten is not far away now, and I expect to see all of you there, even if you do stab me in the Diplomacy Competition. (And that is chronically organised, as many games as you can play in 24 hours indeed! Stupid system, what about the Henley pubs? Oh I forgot, Andy Holt doesn't drink. FIX!). Let's hope that the weather is fine. The Scott mansion is an absolutely superb place, and a good time will certainly be had by all. Please turn up.

I have just been to see 'Tommy', Ken Russel's latest film, and if you are a 'Who' fan, then it's a must. If not, then don't bother. I also saw 'The Damned' at University, which was obviously the precursor to 'The Night Porter'. Could somebody please explain the plot to me?

SCIENCE FICTION

Daniel Galouye: "Dark Universe".

This story is set in a post atom-bomb holocaust which has resulted in humanity being marooned underground in a series of interconnected shelters. But the shelter's power has failed. Two different types of race evolve from the survivors. They have a bronze age society which competes for cattle, plants and water. One reaction to the lack of light was to evolve the upper regions of the eye's spectrum sensitivity, and the other reaction was to click stones and listen to the echoes.

The evolution of a religion based on the memories of the outside world through the agency of the 'great god Hydrogen' and the 'Light Almighty'. This novel won the Hugo award for the best science fiction novel in 1962. The visualisation, if it should be called that, of a world without light is complete.

"See! There was that word again - mysterious and challenging and as obscure as the legends from which it had come." (p106)

The claustrophobia and primitiveness of the situation is emphasised in line after line. Mr. Galouye's ability to evoke this world never fails him. The emergence of the Survivors into the outside world has some beautiful images to recommend it. The action is that of an individual seeking rebirth into a new world of sensual impression. Jared has been too long in the world of the rock-womb.

"A world without a material boundary, save for the flat ground underneath him, and enclosing that world, not an infinity of rocks and mud, but an infinity of semi-darkness enlivened by pleasant points of light and a graceful disk - at the moment. At other times, it was an infinity of bold, loud light dominated by a great harsh thing called the 'sun'" (p170)

The characterisation is quite good, as is the understanding of a primitive tribal-type society. The characters strive and achieve their limited objectives in the circumscribed limited world of aural perception. The society is a sort of tribal conglomerate, with the individuals having some aspects which are reminiscent of schooldays (hunting expeditions), that are carried out individually. Perhaps one should say, rather than the society being convincing as a tribal society, that it convinces the reader that it could happen the way he said. Rather like the small enclosed world of the island in "Lord Of The Flies", the smallest happening receives a symbolic and painful clarity.

Steve 'What about some food'  
Doubleday.

With DesContent only a fortnight away, I hope that everyone is making preparations for their journey into the wilds of Reading. I have just heard about the rules for the Diplomacy Competition; God are they insane! As many games as possible can be played in the 24 hours from 9am Sat to 9am Sun. The players with the best performance as a particular country qualify for the final. That means that people who play Dippy non-stop from Saturday to Sunday have a far greater chance of qualifying. What about drinking time? Why should Diplomacy mad players and non-drinkers have a better chance of qualifying? Is the Committee going to stand for this blatant prejudice against alcoholics? Yes, no doubt.

Last Saturday saw a poker game at Lothair Road, the abode of John Piggott. This is recounted elsewhere, but I must say that I enjoyed it immensely. Thank you very much, John, for an enjoyable evening, night, and morning. I'm only sorry that not every one can win off Yare.

Final spacefillers, don't any of you forget to vote in the Committee elections, since it looks as if there are going to be fights for some of the posts. By the way, you can vote for me if you like. Other candidates are Steve Doubleday, Dave Allen, Les Paley, Andy Holt, and Richard Sharp. Four of us six can be elected. The choice is yours. USE IT.

LETTERSCRAIG NYE:

I don't know why I should write letters to your zine, when you won't write to mine. But my inconsistency is legendary, so here I am. Anyway, I can't stand it any more.

First of all, please stop sending crummy faked 'dastard' letters. Els keeps thinking her luck has changed.

Next, Steve Doublecross: I don't love Heinlein, I just prefer him to jumped up, overrated, pretentious birdbrains like Aldiss and Ballard. I don't change the subject when Steve mentions "I Will Fear No Evil"; it's just that experience has taught me that discussing a Heinleiner with someone who dislikes it is pointless. (Riddle me this, Piggott; who uses the name 'Heinleiner' for starships, and in what book?).

Steve's memory must be slipping; the lifestyle bit comes after the BT bit. I hope that "is that a quote" was ironic (whoops! almost started getting poisonal.)

Now one of the nice things about Heinlein's characters is that you can never be sure how they are going to react. Taking my pet peeve; Asimov - you always know that his characters are going to employ an unusual property of the radio-active decay of...to get out or in to anything.

"What the fuck"? Peter, your subbers will think it's Retief or Misteimer coming through the postbox.

IDA: Thanks for the OED definition of traitor.

'To stand on Zanzibar and defend Barry McManus'. I hasten to add that I don't know Barry; no come to think of it I have a vague recollection of sitting in a pub and talking... Anyhow, the display of arrogant snobbishness by your two resident SF buffs is a typical example of the sort of behaviour that has alienated me from conventional SF fandom. Steve's crit was acceptable, given that Barry rather overshot the grounds of reasonable behaviour. But John's! 'Science Fantasy' is as good a term as 'Science Fiction'. Just because it wasn't coined by Campbell or Gernsback.....

Brunner has a philosophy, one that is better defined than most of the big name SF writers. He is deeply concerned for the state of the planet, he is pessimistic about the future and he lacks all faith in human nature. Make a damn good Dippy player! Incidentally I had better add that I found 'The Sheep Look Up' unreadable.

Zelazny is violence obsessed. I have sometimes thought that he is a near relative of James Hadley Chase. His religious reworkings are a valid concept, sadly now played to death. 'Lord Of Light' is the outstanding book in this series; 'badly written'? Huh, please supply examples of well-written SF in that case, John. You too Pete.

Fiat Voluntas Mea; If you think my beard is grotesque - you should see my chin!

(( I got a dastard letter too, but did not mention it because I found it in bad taste and unamusing. I would like to know who 'Cuddles' really is, so that I can bite his head off.))

(( Asimov's characters always predictable? Surely you jest! What about 'Nightfall'? Or even better, "It's Such A Beautiful Day"? Both of these had nice twists at the end, quite unpredictable. Asimov's characters are certainly as human as Heinlein's, if not more so (Heinlein's 'baddies' are absolute pearls, 'Space Cadet' for example.))

(( No comment on the IDA until I have had full conversation with Edi Birsan, but I will state now that I want the IDA/UK and NGC to merge, with the 'new' NGC having affiliate status with the IDA and vice-versa; unfortunately I can't afford to waste 80p on nothing at all.))

(( I always liked 'Scientifiction', but that crud Gernsback got rid of it. People have said that Gernsback was the father of SF. I'd put it another way. SF is Gernsback's illegitimate son.))

(( Brunner may have a philosophy, but he suffers from the handicap of not being able to write good SF. After all, Benn has a philosophy, but that doesn't mean that we should award him a Hugo or Nova, does it?))

(( Unless you have a prior knowledge of Buddhism, 'Lord Of Light' is confusing and vague. I found it very hard to read, I must admit, and for an example of good writing, what about 'Protector' by Niven? He gets over some very difficult concepts (being inside another brain) very well. Zelazny does not succeed in this manner.))