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World of Fanzines

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World of Fanzines

WORLD OF FANZINES

A REVIEW BY BERNIE ZUBER:

When I started this column my intentions were to inform our readers of other Tolkien-oriented fanzines and also to make them aware of other fanzines in general science fiction fandom. In the last issue I mentioned those fanzines which were competing for the annual Hugo awards. The results are now in. The winner for 1969 is SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (formerly PSYCHOTIC).

I recently read SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #32, the latest issue. I won't attempt to review it in detail. It's a very good issue and I couldn't do it justice in this limited space. I strongly recommend it to those who would like to acquaint themselves more fully with current science fiction writing and fandom. Excuse me for using an over-used phrase but SFR is "where it's at". Its contributors are not only fans who know how to write but also professional writers who think of this fanzine as a worthy forum for their opinions on writing and living. As a matter of fact, the entire letter column in this issue is from the pros. The art which decorates SFR is by some of the best fan artists. The back cover for #32 is by Tim Kirk. It's a satire on convention hucksters. This scene of gullible young fans and devilish money-grabbing hucksters is a classic. SFR is available from Richard E. Geis, P. O. Box 3116, Santa Monica, Ca. 90403. 52-pages of excellent mimeo for 50¢.

The Hugo winner for best fan artist of 1968 is Vaughn Bode. He deserved it for his talent and especially for his creativity. George and Jim lost out but I have no doubt that they will be in the running again at the next Worldcon.

TRUMPET was one of the fanzines nominated but evidently the voters felt its contents were not as interesting or stimulating as those of SFR. In my opinion it still is the most visually attractive fanzine. The current issue, #40 is no exception. The most striking thing about it is the full-color George Barr cover. The original cover was made from was a prize winner at last year's Gaydon art show. It depicts an elfin princess and a frog surrounded by a decorative border and it's done entirely with colored ballpoint pen! Inside the issue there is more art by George, a folio of Gormenghast illustrations by Tim Kirk, a folio of ink drawings by Jim Nielson (a relatively new fan artist) and other good art. The literary contents didn't impress me as much this time. The most interesting article for sf fans is "Dream in Flame" by Larry Niven. It won't make complete sense unless you've read Niven's World of Ptavus, Neutron Star and Gift from Earth because in this article he analyzes an idea which would turn the basic assumptions of these stories into a hoax. Still, even though I have not read all the stories, I found his explanations of plots and counter-plots quite fascinating. The funny thing is that Larry has since written another book which, in turn, invalidates this idea. Confusing? The other articles and fiction vary from good to indifferent. I didn't care for the tongue-in-cheek reviews of crude monster and space-opera films which the editor seems to enjoy writing. Issue #41 should be out by now. For copies write to Tom Reamy, P. O. Box 523, Richardson, Texas 75080. 48 pgs. of offset printing for 75¢.

Now on to the Tolkien fanzines ...

HOOM #4 is dated April '69 but since it was only recently reviewed in LOCUS I assume it has been sent out irregularly since April. It is published by Bee Bowman and Frank Denton. Bee, who calls herself Gollum's Grandmother, does most of the editorial work and so it is her personality which shapes this fanzine. She is a high school teacher and she includes exam questions and answers as fillers at the bottom of pages. The stupid answers are funny and yet sad when you realize they are from 17 and 18-year old students. HOOM is dittoed and that, in my opinion, is its downfall. Charlie Brown, in LOCUS, said it was fine ditto. Is there such a thing? I really had to strain to read HOOM, especially when articles reached invisibility at the bottom of the page. I can't say anything much about the art either. The only good art is by Mattiwillis Beard, on one of the only two offset pages which features her poem "Lament of the Elf Lord". The other offset page is a Tengwar chart by Alpajpuri. The poor appearances of HOOM reminds me of what fanzines used to look like about 10 years ago. Then, I hardly bothered to read them. The better reproduction in current fanzines has made me an avid reader but when I see a poor ditto job I'm tempted to toss it away. Since Glen loaned me HOOM to review it, I couldn't very well do that. I laboriously read, or at least viewed, the contents and I wasn't impressed by the writing either. There's poetry (but I'm not fond of poetry, so I won't judge), a piece of fiction which is some kind of anti-establishment fantasy satire (it ended badly and left me cold), a poorly written review of Zelazny's Isle of the Dead, editorials, a so-so letter column, etc. The best I can say about HOOM is that it is vaguely reminiscent of NIEKAS because it also discusses other fantasy and sf besides Tolkien. But it'll be a while before it catches up to NIEKAS. Write to Bee Bowman, 1223 Crofton Avenue, Waynesboro, Virginia 22980 for 56 pgs. of cruddy ditto. Perhaps #5 will be an improvement.

NEWS FROM BREE #1 is a publication of the Tolkien Alliance, a round robin letter group which discusses Tolkien and related subjects. Round robins are worthwhile but I prefer fanzines so I'm glad this group decided to publish one. The editors, Robin Shuster and Susan Bregman are, to the best of my knowledge, high school or early college girls from New York state. The editor of HOOM should read NFB and learn from it. Not only is the mimeo reproduction quite good but the writing is more interesting and enjoyable than the contents of HOOM. Both editors are enjoying their discovery of fandom and they communicate this to their readers in a casual writing style which flows well. In "Evangelizing Tolkien" Robin tells how much fun it is to keep hounding your friends to read LotR. "Some reflections on Love in LotR" by Allyson Johnson describes the types of love found in Tolkien's work. The only kind missing, apparently, is sensual love. "At the Sign of the Prancing Pony" is a new idea in fanzine features. It's made up of round robin letters edited to read like a round table discussion. Robin, Alpajpuri and David Ring discuss the Valar for 2½ pages. I wish it had been longer. Sue Bregman's "We Hate You, Lin Carter" is a very funny account of how the editors met Carter at the New York Lunacon, followed by a brief review of his book on Tolkien. Sue points out some mistakes in Carter's summary of LotR which I missed because I skimmed over that part to get to his other chapters. The art in this first issue is not the greatest but since it is done by the editors and their girl friends I imagine it will improve. The best is an

offset page of psychedelic beasties by Randie Cowan. The title for the cover and the one for the editorials are done in bad imitation psychedelic lettering. It's a form of letter which is already hard enough to read when done by professionals. Why is it that younger fans must associate Tolkien with psychedelic art, peace symbols and the hippy scene? I doubt the creator of Middle Earth would approve. I don't know how many copies of this first issue will be left but if you want one better write to Robin Shuster, 12 Besen Parkway, Monsey, N. Y. 10952. 16 pgs. for 40¢.

There seems to be some discussion in fandom these days as to what constitutes a fanzine. Some fans think poorly mimeographed or dittoed fanzines are more "fannish" while others prefer offset ones such as TRUMPET. Because of its appearance and contents MYTHLORE has been described as a literary journal (see Stanly Hoffman's letter). This would equate it to ORCRIST which I described as definitely not a fanzine in our previous issue. However, something new has happened to ORCRIST recently. Its upcoming issue has been combined with THE TOLKIEN JOURNAL for a special issue. Ed Meskys, the editor of TJ, turned over the layout of that issue to Glen who decided to have it illustrated by MYTHCORE artists. I've seen the finished layout and I think it will be the best looking issue of TJ and a tremendous visual improvement for ORCRIST. Bonnie, Diana Paxton, George, Tim, Steve Fabian, Bruce McMenomy and myself contributed handsomely and Glen did a great job of putting it all together. It's heartening to know that it will go out to all the subscribers of TOLKIEN JOURNAL and that our efforts will be seen by that many more people. I highly recommend it to the readers of MYTHLORE. It should appear some time this fall. The best way to get it would be by sending \$2 to join the Tolkien Society of America. This entitles you to 4 issues of TJ. Write to TSA, Belknap College, Center Harbor, N. H. 03226 or Ed Meskys, Box 233, Center Harbor, N. H. 03226.



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