

# figures of earth

a column by Bill Kostura

Most readers of fiction would probably admit to having certain favorite authors or preferring a particular genre or so. He might have a complete set of Louis L'Amour westerns, Chandler mysteries, or Edison Marshall historicals or perhaps he prefers the naturalism of Conrad, or the wisdom of Woody Allen. Each of these, for perfectly excellent reasons, have their devotees. Yet, as Lester del Rey has said of his particular "category," "anyone who reads only science fiction is a non-reader," and of course this applies across the board.

One finds, in fact, that the more one strays from that particular corner of the bookstore which has kept him busy since junior high, the more fun and intriguing reading can be. This is not to mention all the mind-expanding insights of cosmic range and importance (which everyone else, of course, had known about all along) which such literary experimentation can lead to, or the varied new ways you now have to blow your purse contents on.

Still, there are certain stretches of bookstore wall you avoid like an optional final exam, certain Regions in which the Discriminating Reader was Not Meant To Travel. I refer to the most obviously ground out examples of production line hackwork, the commissioned novels and series which probably account for a sizable majority of newsstand sales.

Perhaps you have wondered, with accompanying guilt feelings, just what goes on in these most popular of books. On the other hand, perhaps you have not. Regardless, I shall reveal all: welcome to The Pits.

Actually, it takes a certain skill to write a Harlequin Romance. (Pause for gasps of disbelief, laughter, or whatever). There are stringent formulas of plot, subject matter, and writing style which must be adhered to, and which assure a bland sameness from book to book. The Harlequin editors, in the infinite wisdom, have determined what sells best to the broad base of the American public, and have derived their formulas accordingly. To the perfecting of this formula the would-be Harlequin writer dedicates himself.

One such writer is "Sue Peters," author of *Cloued Waters*. (Production line authors, in order to assume provocative selling names, and perhaps protect future literary reputations, generally employ a pseudonym. "Peters" is a common author of porn novels; other Harlequin authors

include "Violet Winspear," "Roumelia Lane," and "Joyce Dingwell."

*Cloued Waters* is the poignant, if perhaps familiar story of a pair of lovers from neighboring English families which are engaged in bitter feud. All through the novel Marion Dane wonders, for the sake of her family, if she can allow herself to marry Adam Baird. She feels that she and Adam are in the right, and yet... yet... Bravely, Marion holds up through the first 168 pages, at which arbitrary point someone wonders where her twin siblings, Tim and Lucy, are. Based on some vague evidence, it is brilliantly determined with certainty that they have gone to feed the otters down by the river, which is swelled from the previous night's storm, and therefore an unsafe place to be. Half the family rushes to the site, but Mel the dog gets there first and saves them. Just at this time the Bairds arrive to mend the weakening bridge. The Baird dog, cleverly sensing the hatred between the families, attacks Mel, sending them both over the bridge, which ends *that*. But they take still another Dane kid with them, and the two families have to unite in a successful rescue attempt. Adam Baird then declares his love for Marion who, all

a'tremblin', stays quiet. He then decries the senseless feud, and looks to his father, who admits, "I reckon he talks sense." voila, the problem of generations is permanently solved.

These novels, intended for your fairly average housewife, are devoid of any sexual encounters, hopes, or desires beyond a brief, if passionate, hug and kiss. (They may occasionally dance or stroll through the woods too.) Marriage and children are always uppermost in the mind of the Harlequin heroine. (Presumably this comforts our average housewife, who may be married to a jerk and surrounded by squalling, ill-bred brats. Whether she wishes to be convinced that she has "done the right thing," or secretly wishes to see the heroine fall into the same trap is, however, unclear.)

The alert reader will find other qualities to these books as well. Sexual innuendos and double meanings are spread through the text; these take the form of puns and certain contrived situations.

If, after reading this review, you simply must try a Harlequin Romance, I suggest running down to Simon's Paperback and Nostalgia Shop (3527 Texas; free plug), where I got mine. They're half price, take trade-ins, and would love the business.

## Simon's "Murder" ribtickler

By SHEPHERD GRINNAN

Have you ever read detective novels and become irritated by the detective's excessive ego, use of horrible English or street slang and the general uppity attitude of a know-it-all who springs previously unknown characters on you at the last minute as a solution to a crime? Wouldn't you like to kill him?

Wouldn't it be interesting if you could invite the five best detectives in the world to a creepy mansion and finally put them in their place by presenting them a murder which they couldn't solve?

This is what Neil Simon does in the movie "Murder By Death." He borrows the basic plot from the Agatha Christie book *Ten Little Indians* and arranges for the five leading detectives in the fictional world to be invited to the mansion of Lionald Wayne (pronounced Lionell Twain, played by Truman Capote, whose address is 22 Twain).

These detectives are Dick and Dora

Charleston (alias the Thin Man and Wife, played respectively by David Niven and Maggie Smith), Inspector Wang of Catalina Island (alias Charlie Chan, played by Peter Sellers), Sam Diamond (a cross between Sam Spade and Richard Diamond, played by Peter Falk), Miss Jessica Marple and Milo Piray (both Agatha Christie super-detectives played respectively by Elsa Lancaster and James Coco).

These five super-sleuths, accompanied by their assistants, converge in separate

### Movie Review

automobiles on the mansion on a fog-filled night. Inspector Wang, irritated by his "number 3 son's" comments, tells him his "conversation like television on honeymoon, unnecessary."

At the same time, Milo Piray's French chauffeur, feeling the coldness of the

## "Mom's" — like home

# Alternative to bad food

By SARAH WHITE

Mom's Dining Room is a unique local restaurant where customers are treated to down-home cooking in a folksy atmosphere. Mom is Mrs. R. E. Carleton, who some forty years ago, opened her home to Aggies in search of good food in a nice atmosphere, at a reasonable price.

Assisted by four other cooks, Mrs. Carleton prepares home-cooked meals on a huge old-fashioned stove. Though the crowds may be large at times, food is always plentiful and Mrs. Carleton has an "all-you-can-eat" policy for every meal. Bowls of steaming whole kernel corn, and baked beans, and loaves of warm bread pass from the oven to the tables where everyone may "help himself."

Is the food in the Commons stale? Do Sbsa and Duncan dining halls fail in the down-home atmosphere department? Does your roommate burn dinner and your apartment smell of last night's fried fish? If the answer to any or (Heaven help you!) all of these questions is yes, there is a refreshing experience awaiting you at Mom's Dining Room, located at 1207 East 25th Street in Bryan.

Breakfast is priced at \$1.50, lunch and dinner are \$1.75.



People enjoy the away-from-home "home-cooking" at Mom's Restaurant in Bryan. Battalion photo by Karen Smith

## Bachman-Turner Overdrive Ovation justified

By PAUL MUELLER

Musically speaking, the Town Hall concert at G. Rollie White Coliseum last Friday night was strictly gut-level: loud, heavy, and without sophistication. But the 6500 people who showed up to see it didn't seem to mind the lack of subtlety. They got there ready to rock and roll, and with the help of Bill Wray and Bachman-Turner Overdrive, that's just what they did.

Bill Wray and band opened the year's first rock spectacular at A&M, playing loud but not particularly interesting rock 'n' roll. Wray, the lead singer in the band, lost no time in getting the audience on his side by wishing the Ags good luck in the Baylor football game. However, his congenial personality just wasn't enough to make up for his band's fundamental lack of musical ability. These guys are new at the music business, and it shows.

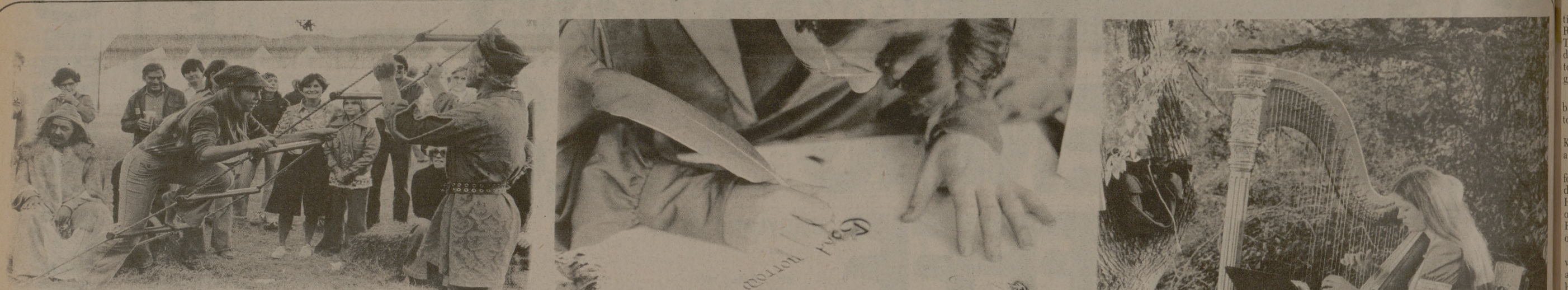
After a rather long intermission, Bachman-Turner Overdrive took the stage and proceeded to shake G. Rollie with its own brand of music. This band's members have been around for a while (two are former members of the Guess Who) and when it comes to heavy basic rock, they know what they're doing. BTO takes a very professional approach to playing its

music, and the result is a clean, loud sound.

### Concert Review

BTO started its set by playing several of its lesser-known songs, mostly taken from its earlier albums. These included "Like A Man," "Hold Back The Water," "Don't Get Yourself In Trouble," and several others. All were solid numbers, well-played and well-received, but weren't what the audience had come to hear.

The band's string of greatest hits began about halfway through the concert with "This Is My Song," a song about music musicians. From there on out it was nothing but solid gold BTO music: "Fragile," "Let It Ride," "You Ain't Nothing Yet," and "Rock and Roll Down the Highway." The band left the stage after that succession of crowd-pleasers but obviously they weren't going to go away without doing an encore. BTO turned a few minutes later to a standard ovation (this one was justified), and performed out "Four Wheel Drive" and "Taking Care of Business" before leaving the



## Courtiers stage Renaissance festival

By CATHY RUEDINGER

Hark ye fair maidens and brave knights. Listen close while I tell ye of a place of great merriment, food and crafts. 'Tis not far from Magnolia, a little town in the state of Texas. It hath been proclaimed a festival to be held in this time of Renaissance.

Upon entering the grounds ye gaze about and see small shoppes which house artisans and food mongers. The whole of the festival is held among the oak and pine trees in a forested 237-acre park.

There are a variety of foods to tantalize the gourmet. Squire John's Drumsticks being the favorite among royalty and peasants alike. This meat being from a fowl

called the Turkey. Renaissance Rooster is yet another favorite among the masses. To put the finishing touches on the gourmet meal sweets are offered — sweet breads made with pumpkin and banana. Drink in the forms of wine and ale and a strange concoction called a "Coke" quench the mightiest thirst.

The artisans with their skilled hands create cut glass pictures, carved wood framed looking glasses, paintings or a garment made in the latest 16th century style. Ye may wish for the scribe to print thy name in the writing of the day. There is a gypsy woman to gaze in ye future if such a thing can be done.

Actors perform for ye merriment in the

Globe Theatre, the Lamb's State or the Cottage Theatre. As ye stroll among the shoppers, jugglers and musicians provide entertainment also. Ye may even be fortunate and see a king strolling amongst the people with a beautiful wench on each arm.

So that ye brave knights may show thy strength and bravery there be a selection of games for thee. The Caber Toss, where a knight may prove his strength by tossing a log into the air; archery, where skill is needed to hit a target some feet away; King of the Log, where two persons try to knock each other off a log with two slightly weighted bags; and the Sword Ring, where two opponents try to break a bag of air

called a balloon on each other's masks. The New Market Race Track is there to provide entertainment for both the lady and the gentleman.

There are but two weekends left in which to enjoy this celebration of life. A charge of \$3.75 for adults and \$1 for children (5 to 12) is asked at the entrance. The festival can be reached by taking Hwy. VI south to the Conroe (Texas 105) exit. Then turn thy carriage toward the east while on this road till ye come to Farm Road 1774. On this road turn thy carriage to the south and the festival grounds will be on thy right between Plantersville and Magnolia (about halfway between each).

## 1940 Buck convertible practically new today Bald woman wears wig to hide insecurity

**Associated Press**  
MANCHESTER, Conn. — "Baldie, baldie, baldie," schoolmates in Michigan called after her more than 25 years ago.

Once, during a fire drill, a child pulled the wig off and exposed her bald head, to the delight of the rest of the pupils.

To this day Kaye, now 36, winces when she says the word bald and doesn't even like to say the word wig.

She says her own maturity and the popularity of wigs have helped give her "a free psyche."

But the scars are still there. She has never allowed her husband of 17 years to see her bald head. She wears a wig to bed and will shop only in wig boutiques where there is a back room for her to try on hairpieces.

And she didn't want her real name used in a story, although she couldn't explain exactly why.

She doesn't know how many other women have the same secret — that under the wig there is no hair — because most people are ashamed to talk about it. The owner of a large local wig boutique, however, says that of every 100 women who buy wigs from him, one is completely bald.

Kaye's hair fell out when she was 4 years old, after she had suffered a low-grade fever for several months. No doctor has been able to explain why.

She says she blanked out about six months of that time and doesn't remember when she first realized she was different. But tears came to her eyes as she recalled that her mother found her standing in a corner one day when she was 4½, crying. Her mother said that when she asked what was wrong, the child replied, "I look funny, don't I?"

Throughout school she was teased by other children and always felt "like a second-class citizen." Occasionally, schoolmates invited her to sleep at their houses hoping she would take her wig off at night, when she had thought they were her friends.

"For years desperately I would dream that when I woke up in the morning all my hair was there."

Her parents, who were not wealthy, spent thousands of dollars on human hair wigs, doctor's visits, injections and heat treatments in the hope her hair would grow back.

During early adolescence, when her body underwent hormonal changes, she grew some hair. When that fell out she realized it never would grow back and began to try to accept it.

When Kaye was 17 or 18, a Methodist minister went to her house to talk over the

problems, telling her:

"You've just got to learn to accept it, and say, 'Yes, I do wear a wig. So what?'"

"Now that I look at it, it's so simple I don't know why I ever tried to hide it,"

she said. "I am in control of my life now."

"You don't ever get over the fear of being rejected by other kids. To the day I die I will never feel comfortable in my body."

## KANM album listings

- | HITS  | FADERS   |
|---|--|
| Boston Boston<br>Lynyrd Skynyrd <i>One More From The Road</i><br>Rod Stewart <i>A Night on the Town</i><br>Gordon Lightfoot <i>Summertime Dream</i><br>Fleetwood Mac <i>Fleetwood Mac</i><br>War <i>Greatest Hits</i><br>George Benson <i>Breezin'</i><br>Steve Miller Band <i>Fly Like an Eagle</i><br>Jeff Beck <i>Wired</i><br>Blue Oyster Cult <i>Agents of Fortune</i><br>Bachman Turner Overdrive <i>Best Of BTO</i><br>Boyz n the City <i>Silk Degrees</i> | Firefall <i>Firefall</i><br>Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band <i>Live Bullet</i><br>Renaissance <i>Live at Carnegie Hall</i><br>Gary Wright <i>Drumcaveer</i><br>Aerosmith <i>Rock</i><br>Jerry Jeff Walker <i>It's a Good Night for Singin'</i><br>Beatles <i>Rock and Roll Music</i><br>Doobie Brothers <i>Taking it to the Streets</i><br>Crosby and Nash <i>Whistling Down the Wire</i><br>Savoy Brown <i>Skin and Bone</i><br>Wings <i>Wings at the Speed of Sound</i><br>Chicago <i>Chicago X</i> |
| RISERS  | NEW ALBUMS   |
| The Lost Gonzo Band <i>Thrills</i><br>Bob Dylan <i>Hard Rain</i><br>Tommy Bolin <i>Private Eyes</i><br>John Hartford <i>Mark Twain</i><br>Herbie Hancock <i>Secrets</i><br>J. J. Cale <i>Troubadour</i><br>Stills Young Band <i>Long May You Run</i><br>Ted Nugent <i>Free for All</i><br>Harry Chapin <i>On The Road To Kingdom Come</i><br>Tim Weisberg <i>Live at Last</i><br>Rory Gallagher <i>Calling Card</i><br>Bryan Ferry <i>Let's Stick Together</i>    | Benson and Farrell <i>Benson and Farrell</i><br>Ringo Starr <i>Rotogravure</i><br>Rusty Wier <i>Black Hat Saloon</i><br>Arthi Dodger <i>Honor Among Thieves</i><br>John Klemmer <i>Barefoot Ballet</i><br>The Billy Cobham-George Duke Band <i>Live</i><br>Automatic Man <i>Automatic Man</i><br>Caravan <i>Blind Dog at St. Dunstons</i><br>Bonnie Bramlett <i>Lady's Choice</i><br>Gino Vannelli <i>Gist of the Gemini</i><br>Flo and Eddie <i>Moving Targets</i><br>Buckare <i>Morning Comes</i>        |