

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group

Honorary presidents: BRIAN ALDISS and HARRY HARRISON.

Number 142

JUNE 1983

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group has its formal meeting on the third Friday of each month in the upstairs room of the Ivy Bush pub on the corner of Hagley Road and Monument Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham 16. There is also an informal meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at the Old Royal pub on the corner of Church Street and Cornwall Street, Birmingham, 3. (Church Street is off Colmore Row.) New members are always welcome. Membership rates are £3.50 per person, or £5.50 for two people at the same address. The treasurer is Margaret Thorpe, 36 Twyford Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2NJ.

JUNE MEETING.

Friday June 17 at 7:45 pm.

This month's guest speaker is BARRINGTON J. BAYLEY. Over the years, Mr. Bayley has written six novels: The Knights Of The Limits, Collision With Chronos, The Soul Of The Robot, The Fall Of Chronopolis, Empire Of Two Worlds, and Annihilation Factor, plus one book of short stories -- The Seed Of Evil. Mr Bayley also wrote as P. F. Woods. In 1981 he was guest-of-honour at Becon.

The meeting will be followed with a Chinese meal at the Lychee Garden restaurant. Please give your name to Margaret Thorpe if you wish to attend.

Admission: Members 30p, Non-members 60p.

ALSO

It is possible the Group may be able to have a picnic in early August, which will be in addition to the ordinary meeting. The picnic (or barbecue) will be held on a Saturday evening and we will travel to the site in a minicoach (plus beer!). Tickets will cost £5 each, from Margaret. Please inform Steve Green, at the June meeting, if you are interested.

We plan to have our own Brum Group T-shirts, complete with logo. These will be available for £4 each, in any size. Again, please contact Steve Green if you are interested. He also plans to have Brum Group badges available for 20p each.

Letters:

JOY HIBBERT.

11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 1JG.

"Thanks for the Brum Group newsletter. Might I respectfully suggest that it's no use advertising Unicon 4 if you don't put their address? Is it possible that you could advertise the Yugoslavian bid for the 1988 World-con? I enclose a flyer. You forgot to mention the son Rebecca West had with HGW."

((Sorry on both counts Joy. But the source of my information on Unicon did not include the address. The address is C/O Alex Stewart, 11a Beverley Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3NG. Ms. West did have a son. His name is Anthony West and he is a novelist also.))

((Joy now refers to something Steve said in his fanzine column, last issue, in his review of the Women's APA compilation 'zine, "Ah, if only we men could be so open about our innermost thoughts."))

"There are clearly two worlds in fandom, and people occasionally slip from one to the other. In one, as stated last n/1, the Glasgow conventions are in autumn, and the Cardiff ones in October. There are a few other differences as well, which become clear. In that odd world, Pat Charnock wrote an article about post partum depression, rather than an article saying that she didn't have it although she'd been depressive in the past. Also, the male fans are still not very 'Quiche' in that world, and never produced such personal stuff (open about their innermost thoughts, to quote from the review column) as Jimmy Robertson's excellent Felicity, the latest one-man-operated Second Hand Wave and odd articles other places, such as in Roy Dalgeish's Dragonbreath2. The differences between the two worlds are minor, but it gives one a feeling of disorientation, particularly when you notice that Joy Hibbert also exist in the other world, but since he isn't credited as one of the editors of Biscuit, I must assume that the couple haven't got together yet. This strikes me as being sad."

STEVE GREEN

11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham. B27 7SD.

"Congrats on the new layout; the Brum Group newsletter has come a long way in the last two issues — grief, you've even managed to sneak in a few items of news! Not that it's perfect quite yet, of course — I can't say I was particularly impressed by May's back cover, which surely could have been used for an expansion of the lip-service biography of Barry Bayley on the front or for one of Phill's better illustrations."

((There would have been more on Mr. Bayley if I could have found more information. Most SF 'textbooks' pay only lip-service themselves to the man. I can only use what I get. I cannot conjure artwork out of the air. This applies to all of you. If you want to see something included in the newsletter, then you will have to send it to me, okay?))

"One minor puzzle you could probably solve: which Star Trek script was the late Max Ehrlich responsible for? Doesn't ring a bell with me, boss....."

((Mr. Ehrlich's episode was "The Apple", in which the crew of the Enterprise encountered a primitive society ruled by a powerful God-machine. Information from Fantastic Television.))

News~

NEBULA AWARDS WINNERS:

Best novel — No Enemy But Time by Michael Bishop.

Best novella — Another Orphan by John Kessel.

Best novelette — Fire Watch by Connie Willis.

Best short story — A Letter From The Clearys by Connie Willis.

The 1983 American Book Award (TABA) has gone to LISA GOLDSTEIN, for her fantasy novel The Red Magician.

ISAAC ASIMOV has given the manuscript of his latest novel to Doubleday. The novel is called The Robots Of Dawn and is the third in the series, which includes The Caves Of Steel and The Naked Sun. Asimov also signed a contract to write another SF novel. (Is there no stopping this man?)

JEAN M. AUEL has sold the film rights to her novels The Clan Of The Cave Bear, and The Valley Of Horses, to Stan Rogow Productions. It is planned to do an NBC miniseries.

URSULA K. LE GUIN is working on a 'multi-media' novel, set in California after a non-nuclear catastrophe. It is to contain prose, poetry, and illustration.

BUSTER CRABBE, star of the 1930's Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon serials, has died in Arizona on April 23, at the age of 75. He won a gold medal for swimming in the 1932 Olympic games.

ROBERT C. DILLE, the editor/author of The Collected Works Of Buck Rogers In The Twenty-Fifth Century, has also died, aged 59.

Are you going to Novacon this year? If you're a member of the Brum Group, that's a bit of a silly question. But which Novacon will you be going to? There are actually two this year. Our own beloved Royal Angus bash, and one in Pennsylvania, USA. Novacon '83 is being held over the fourteenth to the sixteenth of October with David Gerold as G-O-H. (The writer of several Star Trek books.)

Albacon II seems to have made a profit of £1000, but received a bill for £500 for damage caused by the famous lift party.

NEL have cancelled their British edition of the infamous Battlefield Earth by L. Ron Hubbard, as Scientologists have imported thousands of the American edition. Meanwhile, forensic experts are studying documents supposedly written by Hubbard, in an attempt to prove the man still lives. (Is Stern in on this?)

DUFF (the down-under fan fund) has been won by JERRY KAUFMAN. He will attend Syncon '83, the Australian national convention.

CHRIS ATKINSON and MALCOLM EDWARDS have a son, Thomas. He was born on May 25, which makes him a Gemini. Thomas was the only male allowed in the women's APA (at least for nine months!). How long will it be before his first fanzine comes out?

The Tolkien Society plan to set-up a museum dedicated to Tolkien, in Birmingham.

chairman's report

FROM BRUM, WILL TRAVEL

(Peter Weston recently returned from a ten-day business trip to the United States. As usual, he found time for a little fanac en route.)

In reply to the first question, "No, I didn't see any earthquakes in California" -- although I missed that big one by about three days. (Last time I visited, I flew out of Chicago O'Hare, on a DC-10, two days before that terrible crash. Let's hope I stay that little bit in front.)

And yes, it does rain in Southern California -- baby, it pours. Most of the people I saw had colds, but you can't really have too much sympathy with them -- after all, they get warm rain!

It was real sense-of-wonder stuff, however, on my first morning in Los Angeles, to step outside and be confronted with palm trees lining the road; geraniums growing like weeds in odd nooks and crannies, and -- best of all -- an orange tree in Bobbie Armbruster's front garden. They think nothing of it, these Californians, but it was fantastic to pick and eat an orange, just like that. I always thought they grew in boxes.

Later on, I was collected by L.A. fan Craig Miller, who we last saw as as "Director of Fan Relations" for Lucasfilms, at the 1979 Worldcon. Craig has turned his fanac into a nice way of making a living, doing publicity work for all sorts of SF and fantasy films -- and being really well connected too. He showed me his luxury office, equipped with word processor and dozens of stuffed animals (!), then we sped over the Beverly Hills (quite high, something you don't realise until you see them), past the Hollywood Bowl, to Tarzana, home of Larry Niven.

Larry was elsewhere, though I'd met him at a party the night before, but his wife Marilyn ("Fuzzy") was hosting a party-cum-hike around the hills at the back of their property. Larry's home is a sort of millionaire show-piece, designed by a slightly eccentric architect, and fans, we don't know what we're missing until you see this sort of lifestyle. There I was, lying on an inflated raft tethered in the 'spa', or outdoor jacuzzi, under a burning hot sun. Then we jumped around in Larry's private pool until the stars came out. Venus was particularly bright in the sky, alongside a crescent moon. "Nice special effects, Craig," I complimented him.

The hike itself was O.K., though we didn't actually go anywhere except along a dirt track for about two miles, and then back again. Mad motorcyclists came along every thirty seconds and covered us in dust; it was hot, there was a nice view of northern L.A. ("the Valley") and we talked about SF and fandom. Fuzzy set a fast pace, others present included Craig, Bruce and Elaine Pelz (who talked about the Isle of Wight), and a gaggle of about twenty others.

Next day I visited Venice Beach, a wide expanse of sand, but had no sooner stripped off and flopped down than clouds came over, and it started to rain. The rest of the day was spent with Liz and Jeff (damm! I've forgotten their surnames), reading old APA mailings and discussing ice cream.

Los Angeles is a really nice place, that part of it I saw -- but it's huge. They're running the 1984 Worldcon and that might be a lot of fun; I'd love to go back.

-- PETER WESTON.

Son of Chairman's Report

LET'S GO TWINNING.

Back in January, in one of my epic 'pink sheets', I suggested that the BSFG should consider 'twinning' with some other science fiction group overseas, in much the same way as towns link up with each other; Birmingham with Lyons, I think, and so on.

Now, I know you didn't actually expect me to do anything, but Phill Probert has just provided the missing link to make a vague idea seem like a really good project!

Think about it; we want to form an association with another group, for the purposes of mutual friendship. We want to swap fanzines maybe; perhaps get pen-pals; exchange books and magazines; even arrange visits of some description. Can you think of any place in particular which will be an absolute natural for us to pair-up with?

Birmingham!

Yes, the other Birmingham, the one in America, (Alabama to be precise). We know there's quite a strong SF group there, because every year they invite Bob Shaw to be their special guest. And we could actually read their fanzines (nothing against Europeans, you understand, but my German isn't what it should be). And some of us, Rog, have always wanted to get access to the US Science Fiction Book Club.

Oh, I see all sorts of possibilities in this. Now, here's what we do.

I'll get Steve Green (our fan-man at large) to write to the Birmingham SF Group, get them interested, and get a few names and addresses of their prominent members. We'll publish these in our newsletter, and you, fans, can join in the activity. We'll trade newsletters, send them an honorary membership in Novacon, get their Convention literature. And if all goes well, I'd like to suggest we even consider inviting one (or more) of the Birmingham fans over to Novacon, in either 1983 or 1984.

The idea with 'twinning', you see, is that you look after each other in a strange country. So, the Americans would get our hospitality at Novacon, and perhaps afterwards could stay with local fans, go around the U.K. a little, and then, afterwards, one (or more) of us could go to their convention, and get squired around Alabama. Now do you see what I'm thinking about — and with cheap air fares, there's no reason why a few ambitious members shouldn't go to the USA, if we make up our minds, because a large part of the costs — accommodation, food, etc, would be provided.

Oh, I'm getting a bit too far ahead of myself, but I think this project could be a winner. Let's have some feedback, please!

— PETER WESTON.

((Well, you know what to do. Get out a pen and a bit of paper. Now start writing. Easy isn't it?! So get to it!!))



APA-B

((Coming soon, Chairman's Report III: The Movie!))

AN INVITATION TO JOIN

During the last few months the Group has made various promising noises about APA-B, and now we'd like to get things moving by inviting you to participate. First though, there's some explaining to do; like, what is it, and what is it for!

"APA" stands for "Amateur Press Association", a concept which has long been established in SF fandom. Basically, the idea is that members of an APA each publish their own little magazine -- and they circulate it to all the other members of the APA.

This way, members have all the fun of producing their own thing, (and it can be a lot of fun!) together with the bonus of receiving magazines from other members. If you've perhaps been contemplating a fanzine of your own, then this is an excellent way to begin -- you save on such things as postage, you get something for all the effort you put in, and it's far easier to publish (and write) for people you know, rather than for a lot of strangers, in front of whom you may be just a little unsure of the reception your modest first effort will receive.

For those who haven't contemplated a fanzine, well, this is even more of an opportunity -- a chance to do your own thing, write what you want, perhaps discover you have new and unexpected results in the literary field. Why, you can even inflict amateur science fiction on your audience!

So, how does it work?

Members aim to publish a set number of copies of their magazine, in time for the regular "mailing" -- which with APA-B, will be a distribution at each monthly meeting. You can publish as much, or as little as you want, subject only to a minimum activity requirement ('minac'), which ensures everyone pulls their weight. You don't need to get something into every mailing -- most members will be satisfied with publishing every other month.

And that's almost all there is to it, other than details. For instance, there's an 'OE' (Official Editor) who supervises the collation of 'bundles', chivvies people along, and maybe posts copies to members who don't manage to attend a meeting. And then, in most APAs there are 'dues', which cover the costs of postage and other odds and ends -- which we probably will not incur with APA-B.

Only one small point remains -- you have to provide the creative input to actually write and produce your fanzine. Production is your affair -- it would not be right for the BSFG to 'nursemaid' people to the extent of finding production facilities, although we're sure that various members of the Group will co-operate with each other in duplicating or printing fnz. But, this is 1983 after all, and with ready availability of photostat machines, and so on, we hope this will not prove an insurmountable problem -- regard it as a challenge!

So then, there we have the plan for APA-B. Our intention is to get out the first 'mailing' in June, at the monthly meeting on the seventeenth and monthly thereafter. If we can attract fifteen to twenty members to the APA, that should enable a regular level of eight to ten fanzines to be produced every month (well OK, so some of them may only be single-sheet jobs -- that doesn't really matter).

The reason for doing all this? By now it should be obvious. Writing and publishing is a splendid creative activity, that sharpens the intellect and quickens the wits. The interest generated should make the Group a more lively affair, create greater involvement between members, and lead the way

bigger and better things — and don't forget, there is no reason why an APA-zine should not have a much wider circulation outside the BSFG. All we ask is that the 'zine comes through APA-B first (after all, we don't want mouldy old left overs that everyone has already seen).

Facts and figures time:

APA-B first distribution: June 17.

Official Editor: Cathryn Easthope.

Number of copies required: 20 for the first mailing.

Having explained all that, may we have your support? After all, we need you — you wouldn't want to let down the Brum Group, would you?

— PETER WESTON.

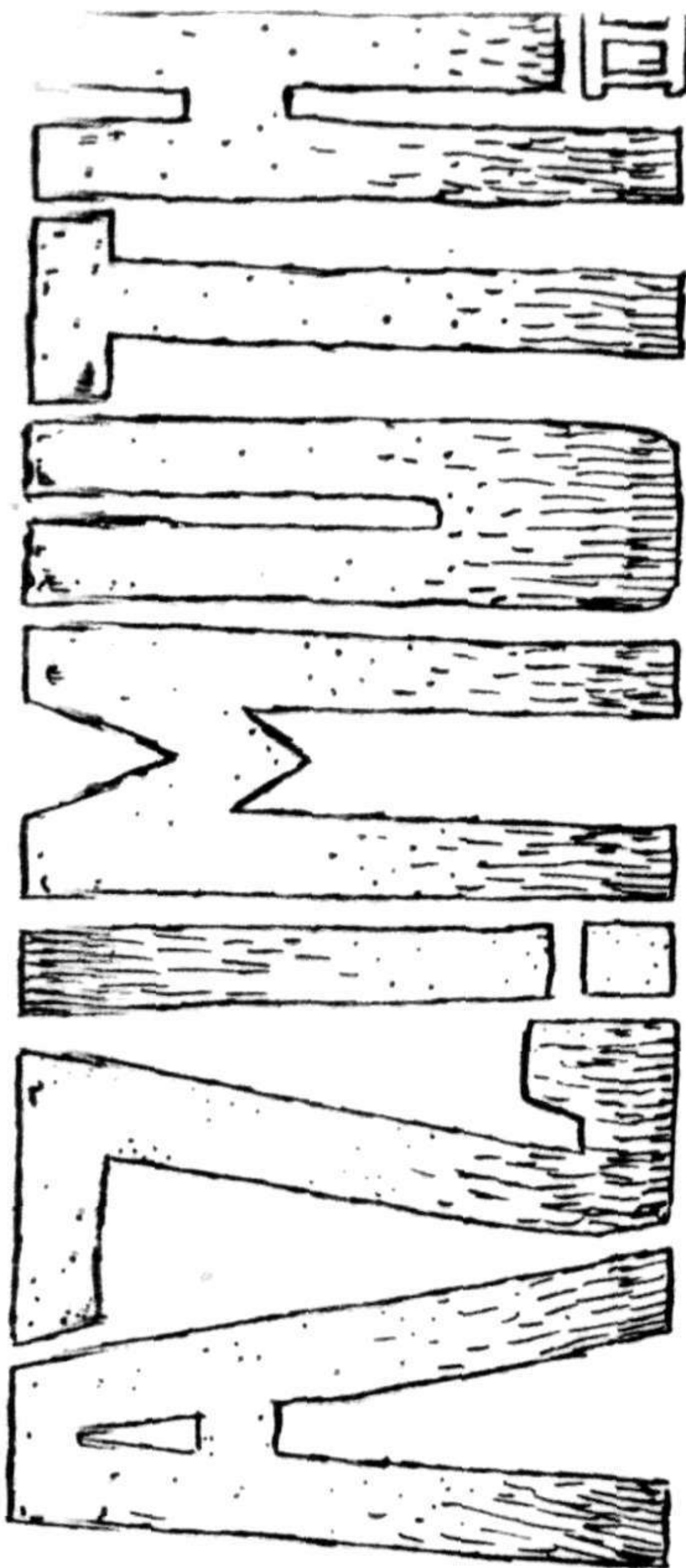
((APAs often come in for a lot of criticism. They're accused of being too stifling, of being smug little cliques where the fan can hide away from the cruel world. The Women's APA especially was criticised as many saw the best female writers spirited away, and their words never more to be revealed to fandom. In fact, the WAPA has grown from a handful of people who wanted to communicate with each other, like a set of pen-pals, to a group of around thirty members. Most have begun to produce their own more general fanzines, who were never involved in fandom before. Some APAs do fail, but others can survive, if every member is prepared to contribute and treat each other with respect.))

Andromeda Top ten

1. Return Of The Jedi by James Kahn. (Futura)
2. Dr. Who: Meglos by Christopher Bidmead. (Target)
3. Return Of The Jedi Storybook by Joan Vinge. (Futura)
4. Earth Invader by Randall Garratt. (Star)
(aka Anything You Can Do)
5. Stainless Steel Rat For President by Harry Harrison. (Sphere)
6. Survivalist One : Total War by Jerry Ahern. (NEL)
6. Survivalist Two : The Nightmare Begins by Jerry Ahern. (NEL)
8. Dream Park by Larry Niven and Steve Barnes. (Futura)
9. The Many Coloured Land by Julian May. (Pan)
10. Non Born King by Julian May. (PAN)
10. Friday by Robert Heinlein. (NEL)

DID YOU KNOW..... that Stephen King is suspicious of the number 13. When he drew a raffle on Friday the 13th, the first number drawn was 166 (1+6+6 = 13). The second number was 85 (8+5 = 13) and the third number was 76 (7+6 = 13). Makes you wonder, doesn't it?!

— DAVE HOLMES.

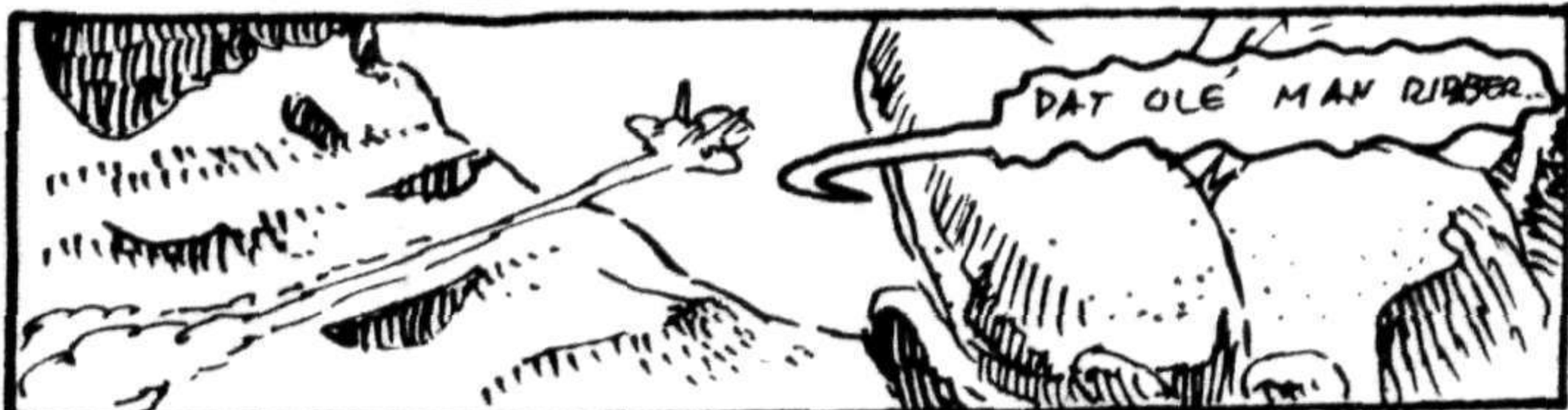


JUST OFF THE BORDERS...

OR

MAJICE IN WONDERLAND.

STORY + ART :



* DIE, WATER VOLE FARTS!!!

NOVACON

THIRTEEN

((A few random thoughts on the event of the year by Novacon's fannish ~~addition~~ public relations man.))

"Novacon is nothing more than a repetitive clique, the same boring programme year after year. And it'll be just the same this November."

Feel the same way? If you do, you won't be alone; a number of Novacon's regulars have drifted away in the last year or so, their once-sparkling enthusiasm dulled by some pretty lame programming by recent committees.

Which is why this year's motley crew has had to start virtually from scratch, rebuilding a fresh new con from the stale reputation of its predecessor. Not only will Novacon-13 have a full main programme featuring guest of honour Lisa Tuttle, Chris Priest, Toby Ro burgh and Rob Holdstock, but Lisa, Chris, Bob Shaw, Garry Kilworth and Dave Langford will be among those taking part in the highly informal alternative programme, launched on the Friday evening with a free-drinks party sponsored by the Brum Group (anyone who attended the Brum Group party at Albacon II in April should need no further recommendation). Mediafans will be catered for, and an early morning radio show will be presented over the hotel public address system during breakfast (there'll be no escape!).

As you can see, it's a very full schedule, but Novacon-13 will still retain more than sufficient opportunities for the relaxed discussions and camaraderie so much a part of Birmingham's resident convention.

So why are you waiting? Send your seven quid immediately to registrations supremo Chris Donaldson at 46, Colwyn Road, Beeston, Leeds 11. You won't regret it.

Novacon-13.
Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham.
November 4-6, 1983.

MORE NEWS

.....of the Solihull SF Group, an off-shoot of the BSFG.

The Solihull SF Group will meet at the Red House, Hermitage Road, (off Lode Lane), Solihull, from 7 pm on the following dates:

June 12, July 17, August 14, September 11, October 9, November 13, December 11 (Christmas party).

Meetings are held informally in the second half of each month; the SSFG mounted a group expedition to see Dark Crystal on May 30, for instance.

The fourth issue of the SSFG's Twilight Zine is now out, with humour from Bob Shaw and fiction from Garry Kilworth, available for return postage from Steve Green, 11 Fox Green Crescent, Birmingham B27 7SD. The fifth issue is due in July and will include a short report on the 1983 Star Trek convention, Bob Shaw on the dangers of smoking in prison, and a lengthy review section. Membership is £1 p.a., which includes six issues of Twilight Zine.

— STEVE GREEN.

Reviews:

FERGUS by Brian Moore, Triad/Granada £1.50, 189pp.

CATHOLICS by Brian Moore, Triad/Granada, £1.25, 92pp.

It appears that there are two kinds of lapsed catholics in the world. Some, like me, never give a second thought to the matter; others, like Brian Moore, become obsessed with the fact of their loss of faith and its possible consequences. Thus, in Fergus we find an Irish expatriate author in Hollywood haunted by the ghosts of his distant Belfast past, charging him with all manner of betrayals while he wonders whether to prostitute his art by rewriting the ending of one of his novels for a movie mogul. In Catholics we find the abbot of an abbey in Kerry put under pressure by an emissary from Rome; the monks are threatening the ecumenical movement by retaining the Latin mass and insisting on a mode of belief that has been surrendered by the Church. This second story qualifies as science fiction by virtue of being set in the near future, and attracted attention by its portrayal of a Catholic church gradually abandoning faith in order to keep pace with the world, but it is really the story of the abbot, who is forced by circumstance to face the fact of his own loss of faith. Despite the ghosts in the one book and the futuristic setting of the other there is not much here to attract addicts of SF and fantasy, but all lapsed catholics who cannot put the past behind them will probably revel in the stories. There is nothing here to touch Moore's allegorical novel about the treacheries of artistic creativity, The Great Victorian Collection.

Reviewed by BRIAN STABLEFORD.

YEARWOOD by Paul Hazel, Sphere £1.95, 276 pp.

You finish this novel feeling that it's been read by candlelight in a coal mine. Its dark atmosphere and the aimless wanderings of the hero, Finn, tend to become rather dreary and dire after a while. Finn's witch-mother keeps the secret of his father's identity from him. As he grows to manhood, Finn resents his bastardy and leaves his mother's house in search of a name, an identity, and his father. He finds that his destiny is to fulfill several prophecies, but this does not satisfy his quest, leaving plenty of scope for a sequel. The writer has included various Norse myths and imagery, and there is certainly some powerful writing, but the characterisation is not as solid as this type of fantasy needs, perhaps because the book is written in the first person. A lighter atmosphere would have helped things along.

Reviewed by MARGARET THORPE.

THE ELECTRIC FOREST by Tanith Lee, Hamlyn £1.25, 159 pp.

Tanith Lee cheats -- in the same way as film directors do in frightening the viewer with cardboard sharks. The plot here involves a crippled girl who is ugly in a world where most people are the result of careful genetic matching. Given the opportunity to possess the artificial body of a beautiful woman, she takes it. She knows she is being used, but to have her consciousness transferred into a perfect body makes everything else of lesser importance. This marvellous little novel is spoilt by the explanations of everything in it. It reduces the reader's sense of wonder to statistical equations.

Reviewed by PAULINE MORGAN.

Life has become impossible on Earth and so great resource-consuming colony ships go boldly etc. There are quite a few surprises along the way however. Something is being concealed by the sinister BCs (beaurocrats) and murder is a small price to pay to keep it that way. Normally I cannot abide 'colony novels' but I must confess, I did enjoy this one. It is very fast-pace and full of adventurous souls -- but Rohan does not forget that his characters are human. This is his first novel and I would like to read more from him. It is not your actual White Hotel stuff, but it holds your attention right to the bitter end. Run To The Stars is worth buying.

SHARRA'S EXILE by Marion Zimmer Bradley, Arrow £1.95, 365 pp.

The sequel to The Heritage Of Hastur and a vastly improved version of The Sword Of Aldones, this must rate as one of Bradley's best Darkover novels. Returning to Darkover in response to his father's dying request, Lew Alton brings with him the Sharra matrix. This remnant from the Ages of Chaos, is a weapon of devastating power which the enemies of Darkover's isolationist policy wish to unleash. Trained in the web of intrigue, Regis Hastur's awakening laran gift could be the only means of freeing Lew from Sharra's power and destroying the matrix. Since writing the original, rather poor novel, Bradley's skill has increased tremendously, and she has turned the basic idea into a fast-paced, well-characterised and stylish work of excellence.

Reviewed by PAULINE MORGAN.

End Bits

We have one new member this month: Trevor Mall, who lives at 137, Ward End Road, Birmingham, B8 2QY. Ian Warner and Brendon Davis have both rejoined.

News this month comes from Locus and the effervescent Dave Langford's Ansible. Thank you's go to Pete for his many contributions to this issue, (come on you lot, Pete's typewriter must have worn out by now) and to Steve for his. Artwork this month is by Mark Brooker, (page 8) and Phill Probert. The editor of this mish-mash was Eunice Pearson of 32 Digby House, Collets Grove, Kingshurst, Birmingham, B37 6JE, with much help from Phill.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: MONDAY 4 JULY.

STOP PRESS.

SATURDAY JUNE 25. from 2pm.

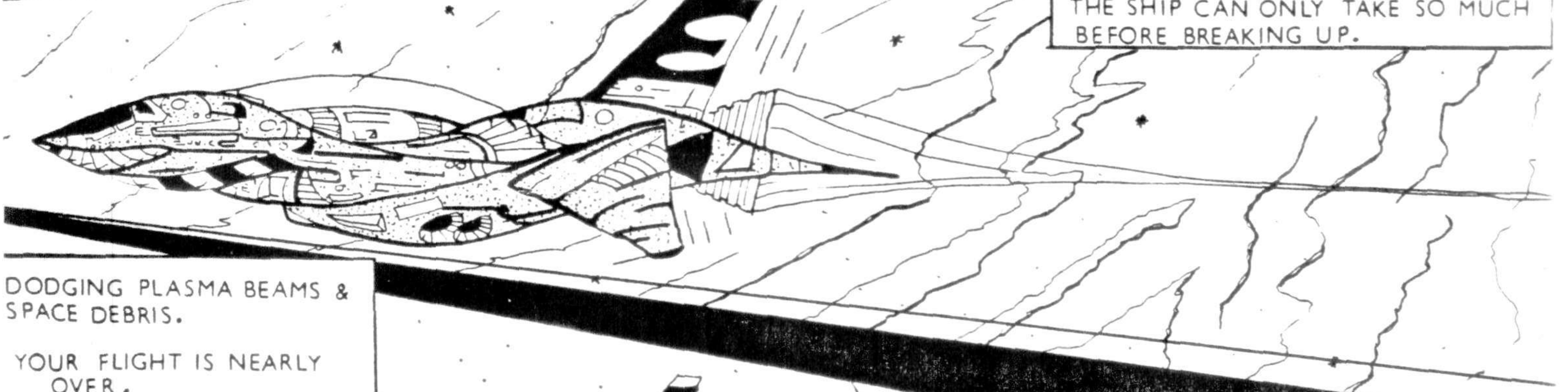
BRIAN ALDISS will be at ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP to sign
copies of HELLICONIA SPRING. (Granada £1.95)

P.S. Mark Brooker's cartoon will be continued next month.

Printed by Tim Stanard and his
eversolovely photocopier.



YOU ARE A BLOCKADE RUNNER
ESCAPING AT FULL SPEED.



YOU FLY AS FAST AS YOU CAN BUT
THE SHIP CAN ONLY TAKE SO MUCH
BEFORE BREAKING UP.

DODGING PLASMA BEAMS &
SPACE DEBRIS.

YOUR FLIGHT IS NEARLY
OVER.



YOU ARE HOME.

YOU HAVE BEAT

THE **Rush hour**,

THIS TIME — —