

THE S.F. CRITIC · SEVEN

A Supplement to S.F. Weekly

Star Gladiator by Dave Van Arnam b/w Special Delivery by Kris Neville. Belmont Books, 1967; 50¢.

Star Gladiator is a curiously flawed book. It has been written as entertainment, but contains elements that jarr. The hero, Jonnath, is swept into the arenas of a ruthless star empire when the Star Guards of Zarmith II attack the peaceful planet Kalvar. Jonnath dedicates himself to winning free from the Arenas (a vast system of Roman-type gladiatorial games, designed to keep the citizens of the Empire happy) and tracking down the murderers of his parents, the abductors of his fiance and her sister. This is, basically, where the novel falls down. I don't want to give away the plot (although you know everything comes out right in the end), but Van Arnam has some curious inconsistencies in his revenge-motivation.

Jonnath, obsessed with the desire for revenge, fought his way up and out of the gladiatorial world. Yet when he gained his freedom and came fact to face with Borlat Vorz, one of the Star Guards he had often dreamed of killing, he expressed only pity and compassion for the man, and came away without touching him. Would a man who had lived for revenge do this? I don't think he would.

Jonnath has shown that he is not really motivated by an all-encompassing desire for revenge. Yet when he is offered the chance, later, to join other survivors of his home planet in their bid for freedom and the crushing of the Zarmithian empire, he joins them, but only to use them as a tool for his own vengeance, the very same vengeance which no longer seemed to motivate him. At was at this point that I lost all feeling of empathy for Van Arnam's hero. Aside from the inconsistency, a man who will use his fellow countrymen for his own purposes with no regard for a greater goal, a greater good, is not my idea of a hero at all.

Van Arnam has introduced a great deal of names into the opening chapter of the novel. Exposed to so many unknown and unpronounceable names at once, I promptly forgot and/or confused several which figured prominently in the story. Van Arnam tells me that these are the names of characters and places in future books in this series. I counter that he succeeds in confusing the reader. A more satisfactory method of entwining them in his readers' minds would have been for them to be mentioned passingly throughout the book, rather than all at once at the beginning.

Basically, he has done a satisfactory job of this book. The action is perhaps too compressed; there is too much detail for the length of the novel. Dave tells me that he was limited by the Belmont double format. The book is full of action, gladiatorial swash-buckling, and all the other elements of exciting action adventure. While it does have faults, basically it is in the grand tradition of Planet Stories.

Dolphin Island by Arthur C. Clarke. Berkley Highland Books, 1968; 50¢.

This short novel was originally published in Worlds Of Tomorrow magazine, and then in hardcover as a Holt, Rinehart & Winston juvenile. It fits in neatly with the segment of the future that Clarke has developed around the sea, particularly as in The Deep

Range. Clarke has developed a great love for the sea, especially for the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, a love which he has imparted to several books, including The Coast Of Coral and Dolphin Island. This novel has the best of Clarke's juveniles in it: a deep and profound respect for the ocean, fascinating details of life along the Great Barrier Reef, a future sketched in precise terms, and a fine story.

Turning On by Damon Knight. Ace Books, 1968; 50¢.

A catchy title -- no doubt designed to draw the buying power of today's younger science fiction readers -- covers what is basically a solid collection of Knight's fiction, written over a spread of some thirteen years, from the beginning of the fifties -- and the start of modern sociological sf -- to the mid-sixties, and the ground swell of the New Wave.

This is a very fine collection, if for no other reason than that Knight has gone through his stories and chosen a delicate balance of his better works. Knight is shown at his best from the moving "Mary" through the cold calculation of "Semper Fi" "Auto-Da-Fe," the dying "Night of Lies," and into the humor of "The Big Pat Boom," written when Knight was at the height of his cow period (Knight's cow period was so intense that he actually sold two pages of Cow Jokes to Esquire, including the one about the composer who wrote Moo-Indigo, and other mooronic things), to the stark fannishness of "A Likely Story." The latter, using the names and characters of New York's Hydra Club, albeit slightly modified, is to Knight what "A Way Of Life" is to Robert Bloch -- a cute and harmless "In" joke, amusing to many, truly funny to a very few, perhaps especially to Harry Harrison.

Turning On is a solid collection from the bright Gaughan cover to the very last page
New Worlds Of Fantasy edited by Terry Carr. Ace Books, 1967; 75¢.

This is a good, solidly edited collection of modern fantasy. Terry Carr has brought together some fine stories in this volume, including John Brunner's "Break The Door Of Hell," which clearly illustrates why Brunner is one of the finest writers to have ever appeared on the British scene. There are other fine stories in this volume: R. A. Lafferty's "Narrow Valley," a tale which further delineates Lafferty's gift for humor; "Stanley Toothbrush," the editor's own contribution; "Come Lady Death," by a writer little known within the field; and "The Lost Leonardo," a tale which clearly contrasts J. G. Ballard's prose experiments with what he is capable of doing within the confines of modern science fantasy -- and which clearly shows that he is capable of being a true master of the genre.

There is, also, Roger Zelazny -- "Divine Madness" is done also, and done better, by Damon Knight in his "Backward, O Time," published a decade before Zelazny's tale; "The Squirrel Cage," a rather humdrum "I Am Property -- But Of What" story by Thomas Disch, surely science fiction's most overrated writer; and "The Other," a charmingly chilling story of a child inhabited by a Mysterious Thing, with an interesting Surprise Ending.

The book is balanced between the fascinatingly brilliant and the mundane, a good collection. It vividly shows what is happening within the field and without; what directions science fantasy is capable of taking, and gives a good account of itself.

The Coming Of The Terrans by Leigh Brackett. Ace Books, 1967; 50¢.

This is a collection of Mars stories, culled from the pages of Planet, Startling, Amazing, and F&SF. The earliest dates from 1948; the latest, 1964. This long-lived series is in the tradition of action-adventure science fantasy, set against the bright jewels and dying civilizations of Mars' ancient past and dusty future. The book is a clear example why Leigh Brackett is rightfully regarded one of the finest writers of fantasy today.

The Best SF Stories From New Worlds edited by Michael Moorcock. Berkley Books, 1968; 60¢.

This is a very uneven collection, an indication of the condition of New Worlds today. Opening with "The Small Betraying Detail" by Brian Aldiss, a particularly forgettable story, it goes on to such stories as "The Keys To December" Roger Zelazny's powerful story of an alien world and a not so alien race; "The Assassination Weapon" by J. G. Ballard, one of the author's more unusual and experimental stories, and one which I did not like at all; "Nobody Axed You," a good tale by John Brunner; "A Two-Timer," a tale done entirely within the confines of the English language of the 17th century. The collection is capped with "The Music Makers," a minor story, and Thomas Disch's "The Squirrel Cage," about which my opinion is already noted above.

The collection is very rough; good interspersed with bad. There is no denying that New Worlds is a major force, a major influence on modern science fiction. I am not foolish enough to get involved here in a discussion of the New Wave, nor in a definition of science fiction; those are subjects which have been gone into, with many thousands of words, elsewhere.

This book is simply a clear indication of the many varieties of fiction contained within the magazine. To read through both new and old, modern science fiction and experimental New Wave, seems to be the only suggestion this reader can make. The good with the bad is, like the New Wave as typified by New Worlds, the shape of future science fiction.

A Scourge Of Screamers by Daniel F. Galouye. Bantam Books, 1968; 50¢.

This minor novel has all the consistency of classic bad science fiction: a horde of do-gooder aliens, the evil and corrupt world government, the unconquerable global disease, and the empty-headed hero. If you go for that sort of thing, then feel free to read this one, because you'll really like it.

From The Land Of Fear by Harlan Ellison. Belmont Books, 1967; 60¢.

The thing that really bugs me about this collection is that I opened up to the introduction, read a few lines, and discovered that I am mentioned, my fanzine is mentioned (Harlan even quotes from it -- watch me sue him for \$200 for copyright infringement!) and that neither Harlan nor Gail Wendroff at Belmont Books had the courtesy to send me a copy. Robert Silverberg didn't know he was quoted in the introduction until I told him about it a month ago. That, I suppose, is Harlan Ellison. Three months before I read this he sent me a nasty letter telling me where to go.

The surprising thing is that this is really a very good collection. Surprising because nearly all the stories are from Ellison's early days, before he had burst upon the modern science fiction scene like the proverbial bombshell. Ellison has opened the collection with short snips of stories, bright moments that he has never fleshed with the pen of creation. They exist, drawing attention, and go nowhere. They are examples of the endless creative, fantastic talent that is perpetually within the man, flowing out onto the printed page. There are several good stories here; "Life Hutch" has reached the proportions of a classic survival story; "A Voice In The Garden" is the perfect treatment of one of the great cliches of science fiction; and "Soldier," in both magazine and television treatments presents the contrast of early Ellison and modern, limited-by-the-confines-of-the-medium Ellison. Within the comparison both are fascinating, and both qualify as fine story telling.

Perhaps the best story in the book is not science fiction. "Battle Without Banners" manages, within its few short pages, to sketch in the lives of embittered convicts caught between the high walls to freedom and the guns of a prison. The piece is one of the finest stories I have ever read.

This is a very good collection, all the more surprising when Ellison's penchant for lengthy introductions is taken into account. All too frequently (as in Dangerous Visions) Ellison's introductions detract from the stories they attempt to introduce. In this book, they do not. By all means buy this book; if you don't, you'll be missing a rare treat.

The Rule Of The Door And Other Fanciful Regulations by Lloyd Biggle, Jr. Doubleday & Company, 1967; \$3.95.

This is a collection of shorter pieces, from a ten year period, by the author of The Fury Out Of Time, All The Colors Of Darkness, and other books. Biggle is a man who has been considered for many years one of the vast group of common science fiction writers. Unfortunately, these stories reaffirm this opinion. The majority of the tales are slight, twist-ending stories offering only a few minutes of leisure reading. "Judgment Day" suffers in that it is a good story, with an expected ending; "The Perfect Punishment," a longer story, shows that Biggle needs room to develop his characters and situations, although this one, too, has an expected ending.

"D.F.C." is a competent crime story. Perhaps the best tale of the lot, and the most unnoticed at the time of publication (seriously overshadowed by "A Rose For Ecclesiastes," published in the same issue of F&SF), is "Wings Of Song," a moving and well-written tale of the far future. It is the best story in the book, yet has passed nearly unnoticed.

This is an adequate collection. Unfortunately, it shows that Biggle does his best work in longer fiction, of which this book has few examples.

Path Into The Unknown: The Best Of Soviet Science Fiction. Introduction By Judith Merrill. Delacorte Press, 1968; \$4.95.

This all too short selection is a welcome addition to the growing amount of Soviet science fiction available in the United States. It presents an amazing advance over that of a few short years ago, a science fiction dominated by political treatises and examples of why Murray Leinster was incompetent (an early example of Soviet sf took Leinster's "First Contact" to task, for the Soviet writers knew that an alien society must be based on Leninist principles, and would have greeted human with open tentacles).

This present collection is far above previous works. From the warmth and humanity of "Meeting My Brother," through the precise problematical science fiction of "An Emergency Case," to the fascinating glimpse of everyday Soviet life in "The Boy," this book adds a new dimension to science fiction. This is an international dimension, science fiction written through the eyes of what has increasingly become a separate culture. Although the initial stories are abrupt, clearly marred by translation problems, the reason this collection is so fascinating is clearly delineated in Miss Merrill's introduction. Prior to this collection, soviet attempts at science fiction did not interest the sophisticated readers of American and British science fiction. With this book, the attitude should change quite sharply. The volume is welcome, and long overdue.

Operation: Phantasy; The Best From The Phantagraph. Edited by Donald A. Wollheim. The Phantagraph Press, Rego Park, NY, 1967; \$4.00. (Available from Donald M. Grant, Publisher, West Kingston, R.I. 02892)

This short (59 pp.) selection of various writings, selected from Wollheim's fanzine of the 1930's, is of interest chiefly for the many contributions of fans turned professional, including Lovecraft, Kuttner, Blish, Pohl, Kornbluth, and Merritt. Were the contributions any longer, this would be the find of the year. Unfortunately, they serve merely to whet the appetite, rather than slake the thirst. This is a small volume, handsomely produced, with a well-done Gaughan cover.

Seetee Ship, by Jack Williamson. Lancer Books, 1968; 60¢.

Seetee Shock, by Jack Williamson. Lancer Books, 1968; 60¢.

These two novels have been long out of print. There seems to be some sort of Williamson revival under way, with four other Williamson books reprinted by Pyramid within the last year. These two books, adding to the flood, are welcome relief from the sociological, new wavical, psychological, and you-name-it science fiction currently being published. If you're in the mind for some heavy science interplanetary adventure, then by all means buy these books.

Science Fiction Inventions edited by Damon Knight. Lancer Books, 1967; 60¢.

This is basically a gadget book. The stories in this volume tend to deal with gadgets, inventions of a science fictional nature. From the pure gadget of "Rock Diver" by Harry Harrison to the sociological results of the actions in Katherine MacLean's "The Snowball Effect," on into the results of the release of one invention on contemporary society, as in "Committee Of The Whole," by Frank Herbert, these are all well done stories. There are, of course, two different types of stories dealing with machines: that which traces the effect of the machine or invention on society, or that in which the effect is recorded on the human beings about which any story must be about. Isaac Asimov has concentrated on the latter in his marvelously well done "Dreaming Is A Private Thing."

The effect of the invention -- the wondrous new gadget, common in science fiction -- has been a good basis on which to hang a world-changing story. Where an invention is introduced, promising great change for the future -- as would a fictional account about early efforts to perfect the automobile -- there is the basis for a good yarn. There is, also, that type of story in which the invention has been introduced, has already changed society and the nature of our daily lives, and in which the characters must move and live, as in Asimov's story. This second type is a great deal harder to write than the first (it's easy to write about something changing our world, because the author can manipulate the effect which ever way he wants; much harder to write a story with characters acting within certain fixed barriers, and make it meaningful to modern readers).

Whatever the basis, Damon Knight has chosen well. These ten stories, from L. Sprague de Camp's 1939 "Employment" to Frank Herbert's 1965 "Committee Of The Whole," are excellent thought-provoking fiction and darned fine writing as well.

The Jewel In The Skull by Michael Moorcock. Lancer Books, 1967; 60¢.

Sorcerer's Amulet by Michael Moorcock. Lancer Books, 1968; 60¢.

The Sword Of The Dawn by Michael Moorcock. Lancer Books, 1968; 60¢.

Fortified with a strong audience for its Conan titles, Lancer has attempted to widen the market for its science fantasy with Moorcock's Runestaff series. As an attempt to interest the hard-core Conan buffs in science fiction, and thus increase the market for it, the Runestaff series is a logical successor to Conan.

Moorcock has a lot of space to play around with. He has chosen, instead of concentrating on one hero and really developing him, to wander over the width and breadth of the earth, with his characters encountering hordes of adventures along the way, and in this manner, to flesh out his main characters according to the way they react to these various menaces and adventures.

The first book, The Jewel In The Skull, has established the locale: Europe of a far future age, when Great Britain is busy conquering the world. The second book relates how Dorian Hawkmoon gathers to him several of the devises of the Runestaff, and the third book tells of his adventures in Londra as well as Asia. Dorian Hawkmoon has now gone on not one, but three Epic Journeys, each time meeting countless dangers and

besting them with his faithful friend, and sometimes with his other, not-so-faithful friend.

Perhaps I am growing tired of Epic Journeys. While I found many of the characters and places described fascinating, Moorcock has not given his readers the chance to assimilate them, as he has the chance to do in a work of this length. In the midst of a fascinating explanation another danger intrudes, necessitating Dorian's immediate exit for still greater adventures. Had Moorcock let Dorian Hawkmoon stay at each location for a greater period, he would have the opportunity to draw conclusions, parables, examples with the real world. But his scenes are too fleeting, too hurriedly sketched to work well. And regretably, the more scenes that are piled on top of each other, the more details are lost. Moorcock is attempting to give a view of a world, but he is only offering quick glimpses, rather than long views. In his attempt to catalog a world, he only convinces the reader of its great contrasts, rather than its many familiarities.

Taken seperately, each book is good entertainment. The three books thus published have left a lot of holes to be filled, although much of this is due to the rapid thrusting of scenes upon the reader. Not the least of the questions is the identity of the Warrior in Jet and Gold, who appears like the cavalry to give our hero an occasional helping hand.

The third book, The Sword Of The Dawn, is the best yet. Moorcock has rested temporarily in the city of Londra, and by developing that city, has given us our best glimpse yet of the inhabitants and civilization of this far-off age. Taken seperately, it is another Epic Journey.

There are many gaps to be filled. If Moorcock can fill them without stretching thin this grand and glorious adventure, then the series can stand as a highwater mark in science fantasy. Until the Runestaff series is ended, however, it must be for the individual reader to decide where they stand in modern fantasy.

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BAYCON/HOTEL CLAREMONT/BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA/AUGUST 31 to SEPTEMBER 2, 1968

ANNUAL SCIENCE FICTION ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS (HUGOS)

RULES OF ELIGIBILITY

NOMINATIONS AND VOTING: Nominating is limited to members of either NYCon 3 or BayCon. Only one item may be nominated in each category. Either NYCon 3 or BayCon membership number must appear on each ballot. A person must be a member of BayCon to vote on the final ballot.

BEST NOVEL: A science fiction or fantasy story of 40,000 words or more which has appeared for the first time in 1967. Appearance in a year prior to 1967 disqualifies a story — a story thus may be eligible only once. Publication date, or cover date in the case of magazines, takes precedence over copyright date. The date of the last installment of a magazine serial determines its year of eligibility. Series under one cover are not eligible for Best Novel award, but individual stories in the series may qualify as short stories or novelettes. The committee may move a story into a more appropriate category if it is deemed necessary, provided the story is within 5,000 words of the category limit.

BEST NOVELETTE: Same rules, with length between 10,000 and 40,000 words.

BEST SHORT STORY: Same rules, with length less than 10,000 words.

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION: Any production directly related to the field of science fiction or fantasy in the media of radio, television, stage or screen, and publicly presented for the first time in its present form during 1967. Series (STAR TREK) are not eligible; but individual episodes in the series are eligible and must be identified by title.

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: A professional artist whose work was presented in some form in the science fiction or fantasy field in 1967.

BEST PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE: Any magazine devoted primarily to science fiction or fantasy which has published four or more issues, at least one of which appeared in 1967.

BEST AMATEUR MAGAZINE: Any generally available non-professional magazine devoted to science fiction, fantasy, or fanishly related subjects, which has published four or more issues, one of which appeared in 1967.

BEST FAN WRITER: A writer whose works appeared in fanzines in 1967.

BEST FAN ARTIST: An artist or cartoonist whose works appeared in fanzines in 1967.

All awards will be the standardized rocket ship and will be designated Science Fiction Achievement Awards, or HUGOS.

-- The BayCon Committee

HUGO NOMINATION BALLOT

BEST NOVEL _____

BEST NOVELETTE _____

BEST SHORT STORY _____

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION _____

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST _____

BEST PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE _____

BEST AMATEUR MAGAZINE _____

BEST FAN WRITER _____

BEST FAN ARTIST _____

For definitions of the categories see the BayCon Hugo rules on the reverse side of this ballot.

Only members of the 25th World Science Fiction Convention (NYCon 3) or the 26th (BayCon) may nominate. If you do not feel qualified to nominate in any particular category for any reason, please do nominate in the other categories available.

NYCon 3 membership # _____ BayCon membership # _____

Please enroll me as a member of BayCon: I am enclosing () \$1
() \$2
() \$3

Membership in the BayCon is \$1 for overseas, \$2 for U.S.A. non-attending, and \$3 for attending. If you wish to join the BayCon in order to nominate and vote on the final ballot, but are not sure you can attend, you can pay \$2 now and another \$1 at registration.

Make all checks payable to: BayCon or J. Ben Stark.

When completed, mail this ballot to: BayCon
P. O. Box 261 Fairmont Station
El Cerrito, California 94530

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT
OF HUGO NOMINATION
BALLOTS IS APRIL 15,
1968.

Fanzine editors are encouraged to reprint and distribute this ballot to their readers, but the BayCon committee must insist that both sides be reproduced verbatim.