

PROGRESS REPORT 1



"Death Goes Modern" (c) Craig Hilton 1991

S w a n C o n 1 8

The Australian National Science Fiction Convention for 1993

Easter 1993, Perth Western Australia

The Con at a Glance

DATE: Thursday 8/4/93 to Monday 12/4/93
 VENUE: The Ascot Inn, Belmont, Perth.
 Room Rates: Single/Double/Twin \$65.00 per night

THEME: **Apocralypse Wow!**

GUEST OF HONOUR: **Terry Pratchett**

FAN GUEST OF HONOUR: **Craig Hilton**

MEMBERSHIP RATES: Until Easter 1992: Attending: \$50.00
 Supporting: \$20.00
 Child: \$25.00
 After Easter 1992: Attending: TBA
 Supporting: TBA
 Child: TBA

THE COMMITTEE:

Chairman	Dave Luckett (09) 349 0804 (AH)
Secretary	Gigi Boudville
Treasurer	Tara Smith (09) 447 7545 (AH)
Programming Co-ordinator	Sally Beasley (09) 224 8248 (W)
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THE VIEW FROM THE HIGH CHAIR

Being the Chair of a convention is not a thankless task. Not only do you get to sit underneath everybody (being a Chair), but you get to thank everyone for it.

In this case, I would like to thank Gigi Boudville, whose organisation of the SwanCon 18 Quiz Night was a marvel to behold. The Quiz Night raised lots of money. Nothing that does this can be all bad. I also have to thank (most sincerely) the people who consented to having their arms twisted to provide a most impressive line-up of prizes.



The questions were entirely my own invention, as were some of the answers. I take full responsibility for this. Especially also to be thanked are the people who donated one dollar a time to correct my answers, but it's all right now, and I'm taking my tablets, and will be all right in the

morning.

This of course does not mean that we don't need any more money, as we are in fact still slightly underbudget and we still need your memberships.

I myself do not care particularly about money, but then again I have 3 escape routes plotted to Brazil, where I shall pretend to be an old Nazi. I have numerous credentials that will come in useful for this daunting enterprise, the most impressive having been the Chair of

SwanCon 18.

This is where I...

Dave Luckett

(DUE TO AN INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE, THIS ADDRESS HAD TO BE FORESHORTENED)

I have seen too many panels - hell, I've been on too many panels - where the only preparation by the panellists has been a stiff drink beforehand, and the only test of how the panel worked was how well the panellists could talk off the tops of their heads. The early Sunday morning panel on sex and science fiction, at Bubonicon in 1984, was a particularly ... interesting ... experience. Some people's heads have more entertaining tops than others'.

As a programmer, I feel that ill-prepared panels should not have too much of a place at a national convention. What the programme will be aiming at is a series of items from the highly participatory to the audience as couch potato, from the funny to the serious, from the literary to the illiterate media-oriented, from ... well, you get the general idea.

Already planned are workshops on how to produce and present a costume for the masquerade, design-your-own-dungeon (maybe as a competition), cartooning, design-your-own T-shirt (certainly as a competition; there will be an entry fee to cover the cost of T-shirt and art materials), and the usual writer's workshop. I would welcome ideas for other workshops, especially if media-related (that area of programming is a bit light on at the moment). We could, for instance, have a workshop on the most artistic way to kill

Wesley Crusher Lieutenant Riker.....

To be negotiated with our Guest of Honour will probably be the usual author's talk, reading, booksigning and hopefully an interview.

To be organised with various literati around the scene will be a strand of academic papers, or at least people giving interesting talks about topics they are actually knowledgeable on. I would welcome ideas and/or volunteers.

There will be the usual Swancon Theatresports, and we plan to run Writersports as well. I expect there to be some live drama, and again would welcome suggestions and/or volunteers. The Grey Company will do another in their series of demonstrations about why a halberd isn't really a good idea in a dungeon, and will also point out that the average D and D player wouldn't be able to move under the weight of all their gear.

Please express interest if you would like to see any organised physical fitness programme, such as aquarobics (with a qualified instructor) in the hotel pool. If enough people express an interest, it will be arranged.

We also plan to arrange some informal discussion groups, led by people

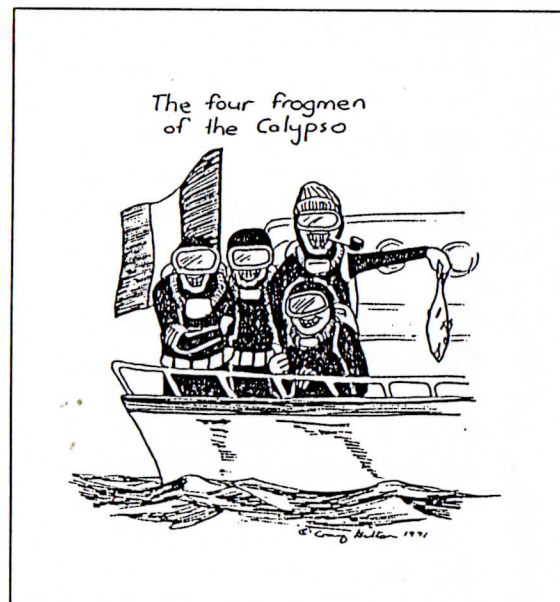
with an interest in the subject in question, as an alternative to panels. There will be a room set-up with tables and chairs, which will probably serve as the centre for both informal discussions and gaming. (There will be a fan lounge as well, of course!) Ideas for discussion groups are also welcome, as are people with special interests.

(Within reason ... remember, there may be general public around, and there will certainly be some children. Whips and chains should be kept in private rooms.)

Children's programming will be handled by the capable Susan Margaret,

who is a qualified teacher and also the mother of a young child, as well as being a long-time fan. Depending on the age groups attending, we will hope to organise activities and maybe outings, or babysitting by qualified persons. Babysitting will not be free, but we will negotiate the best price we can, and the con may subsidise it to some

extent. Children's programming will be free or at-cost (in the case of outings) to child members of the convention. Like most other things at the convention, children's programming is dependent on there being people (in this case children) attending. We would appreciate early notice of likely attenders and ages at the time of the con.



Gaming programming will be handled by Rod Coate, who has written about it elsewhere in this PR. There will also be someone in charge of the literary stream of programming, if I can find or coerce somebody who

will do it. The programming subcommittee also desperately needs someone with interest and expertise in media programming. You know who you are. Please volunteer! I expect, if a volunteer emerges, that there will be someone in charge of the masquerade, or possibly both that and the drama presentations.

Sally Beasley

It is, of course, not unusual for Death to appear as a character in fantasy literature. (I can't think of too many examples, just now, but you can take my word for it. I'm a critic. Trust me.) He's usually pretty strange and grim, though. Hardly surprising, really. I mean, the job has its perks, like always being certain, and not being subject to your own ministrations, but there are formidable drawbacks. Like, oh, the costume, and the poor blighter must be a martyr to osteoarthritis. Not to mention the scythe and the hourglass. I mean, our frontispiece version thinks a hand mower is modernisation. Has nobody ever mentioned the whippersnapper to him? Or the digital watch?

I digress. While Death is often strange and grim, in the hands of Terry Pratchett he becomes strange and ... strange. In "Mort" he took a holiday and, using his ability to warp time, became the world's best short-order cook. In "Reaper Man", (Gollancz, hardcover version 1991) he actually faces the sack.

Now, others have speculated on what would happen if Death ceased, for a time, his activities. Pratchett considers the options, and from the range of possibilities distills a series of minor insanities which are mordantly hilarious.

This is writing which obeys (Obeys? That can't be the right word - Pratchett's work never obeyed anything) one of the cardinal routines of humour, to wit: produce a situation in which the rules are temporarily suspended. Place characters in it who, being human, try to make sense out of nonsense. Develop logically the outcomes, and then raise everything by just one notch.

Thus we have activist Reg Shoe, tireless agitator for dead rights ("You don't have to take this lying down") and Mr Ixolite, who's a banshee with a speech impediment. Instead of wailing on the roof when there's a death in the house, he writes "OoooEeeeeOoooEeeeOooo" on a piece of paper and pushes it under the door. There's Mrs Evadne Cake, a medium, verging on short. Her attitude to her spirit guide is rather the same as Peppermint Grove's to Alan Bond - one needs to keep him in his place, but taking notice of him only encourages him. And we have Death himself, who, on being sacked for developing a personality, gets another job. As a reaper, what else? No industrial retraining in Ankh-Morpork, you know.

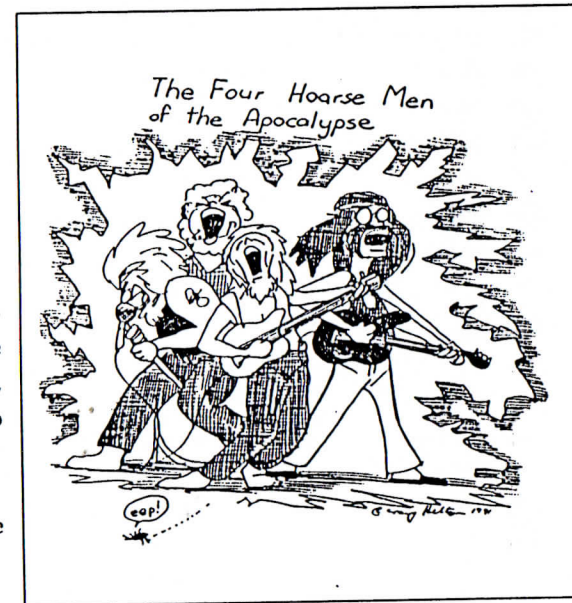
And Death has a personality. Bits don't fall off him, though he doesn't know why, but bits kept falling off his skeletal steeds, so he rides a perfectly normal horse called Binkie. He has a conversation with a child about his true nature and finds it

difficult to cope with someone who has an attention span of three seconds. (Anyone who has ever conversed with a four-year-old will know exactly how he feels. Someone, somewhere, is going to do a rigorous description of a four-year-old's thought processes, which should produce a hyperspace theory as an incidental spin-off. Nothing else in the known Universe can bring into contact with each other matters so widely separated.) He buys flowers and chocolates for a lady. He eats porridge. He learns what fear is, about what it is to die.

He becomes human.

Now, if anybody were to remark that this isn't the first immortal in the annals of literature to take on human flesh and dwell among us, I would be forced to riposte, cuttingly, (thrustingly?) that the text is too slight to hang such weighty matters off. And yet... and yet... I'd do it quietly. Pratchett's

writing has that curiously English feel of understated quality about it. Somewhere under the laughter (and you laugh a lot) there are strong bones, and I really don't know how much weight they might bear. Perhaps enough for a certain degree of immortality.



But you have to return to the laughter, in the end, to the howlingly funny one-liners which would be spoilt if I repeated them out of context. This is a book to savour sentence by sentence, one where footnotes are

necessary to keep Pratchett's wildly comic lateral thoughts in order, and where those footnotes are among the best bits. It's no use me describing it. As with all the really huge jokes, as with life and death, (and Death) you have to be there.

Dave Luckett

Once again SwanCon will provide a rôle playing and gaming stream for attendees. Much of what will be organised will be based on what people enjoy at SwanCon 17 in 1992, and all the rest will be based on what you would like to see run.

Some tentative planning has been done on the following activities:

- a) A freeform. Judging by the past successes, a freeform is almost a must for the discerning convention-goer.
- b) An AD&D tournament. What can we say? <blush>
- c) Some miniature wargaming. The enthusiasts still lurk amongst us.
- d) Miniature painting. Since this ancient art has recently gone through a type of revival, it seems to be a good idea.
- e) Beer'n'Pretzels. A room, some games, and 24-hours per day. What more can be asked for? Other players? Well, that's up to you...

There look to be some gaming panels and discussions filtering through to the programme, and even though they're all very tentative, we'd like to hear from everyone who's interested in helping out with them.

Some of the ideas that have come up are: the perennial world design workshop,

with perhaps a dungeon/adventure design panel, feminism and the chainmail bikini (the effect of an H-bomb - or was that fireball? - on the male libido), as well as a discussion of the hero-myth in rôle-playing.

If you have any suggestions (specific or otherwise) or even expertise or resources to offer, please give us a hoy. With some support, we can make gaming a big highlight of the Con.

SwanCon 18 is also endeavouring to present an exhibition of local genre artwork. Along with the display, we expect to have a discussion on the impact of art and aesthetics on science fiction and fantasy.

We intend to get a number of Australian artists to exhibit some of their work, and more importantly, to stay at the Con for a while, and talk about the relationships between their art and sf&f.

I am intending to canvass widely for artwork, and I'd really like some help from people who know more about the local situation than I do. So, if you'd like to exhibit your art, or know how I could get in touch with others who would like to, contact me either through the SwanCon 18 committee or (during working hours) on 222 7711.

Rod Coate

Terry Pratchett is probably best known for his Discworld series of novels, in which clichés of high fantasy - and, for that matter, other genres - are turned on their heads to humorous effect. He has written other books, however. Good Omens - The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch (written with Neil Gaiman), for instance. Now there's a theme, we thought. Turtles would be too ... obvious, while we were still bidding for the Natcon, we thought. And Apocalypse Wow! was born.



Now if only we could get Josh Kirby to illustrate it.

He has also written books for children (none yet in paperback over here), some science fiction, and a book about cats. The most recent Discworld novel was Moving Pictures, which is still only in

hardcover. Guards! Guards! has just made it to paperback; and Eric (an A4 size coffee table book illustrated by Josh Kirby) came out in Australia around Christmas 1990.

Craig Hilton, our fan Guest of Honour, has been active in Australian fandom for some years. Probably best known for his cartoons, but he also writes articles and filksongs. Exile to a country medical practice (in a mining town) has driven him further into underground comics, and he

even has a strip in the local paper.

*Not gone
David Pratchett © 1991*

There are some things on this earth which were not meant to be. There are some things whose very presence is like the focus of a distorting lenses. Reality wavers and fails in their presence and disturbing things happen. And then their sickly touch begins to spread...

One such thing lurks here. From above we spiral in like a TV naturalist documentary with a generous budget. From above we view the earth and spiral in on the houses below until we find an AD&D session.

[The players are just meeting up with the DM. Player 1 (Name withheld for legal reasons) and Player 2 (Ditto) have played before with this DM. But there is a NEW player, he is

Gary -the Barbaric Player

... and little do they know HOW Barbaric.]

DM: Hi, come inside and let's start... [What fateful words. Inside ...]

DM: We will be playing a primarily city campaign so I would suggest you don't play a druid or a ...

Gary: I'm playing a ranger. Look, I've got the sheet here ... [Passes sheet over.]

DM: ... ranger. Umm. Look I don't have anything against rangers but you do realise they aren't entirely at

home in the city, and ...

Gary: Nonononono, this one is quite at home in the city. See, its special enemy is parking inspectors.

DM: What do you mean, a ranger at home in the city? You don't get much interaction with nature in the city. Unless you mean the wild side of human nature - but that hardly counts.

Gary: Oh well, you see he has a special indoor wilderness. That's where he got all his training and that's where he grew up. That's why he got a special +90% on his bend/bars/lift gates/open doors roll.

DM: They're not the same roll you know and I'm not sure an indoor wilderness really is quite good enough and

Gary: Very nice wilderness. Lots of rolling lawns, a couple of mansions and servants to do all the fetching and carrying for you, bodyguards to make sure the monsters don't escape from their cages while you're killing them and..

DM: ... Hey What? I think that character is out ... you do know how to play AD&D? We're using V2 rules.

Gary: [Looking Indignant] Of course I know how to play. I bet I could beat YOU anyway.

DM: [with blank faced stare of amazement] I'm the DM.

Gary: Yeah, I know. Come on right now right here. Come on. Look here [pulls bulky folder out which sheds some diseased-looking papers] I've

enough characters here to beat ANY you can put up.

DM: I'm the DM. I'm not sure you've got the point of this.

Gary: Look here. A 21st level Thief, 39th level Paladin, 25th level Cleric and an 92nd level Ranger.

DM: Which character in particular are you talking about?

Gary: Nononono, that's one character. This one here, now this one is REALLY powerful. Lawful evil Paladin /Thief/Ranger /Ranger /Cleric. You should see his weapon: A Mace of Almost Total Destruction Except for His Deity Who Takes Lots of Damage. +97 to hit on gnomes, +138 to hit otherwise with ...

DM: [Looking slightly worried.] You are feeling alright? Look anyway I think we ought to get on with this. Player 1: Quite, here I've rolled up my character... this okay?

DM: You [pointing to Hani] roll up a new character... try keeping it to UNDER 5 classes. Hmmm.. [looking over Player 1's sheet] that's okay... yep, that 25 is a bit low... you are, after all, meant to be the muscle man in the party, roll it again.

[Player 1 takes back sheet.]

Gary: Okay, finished that. Want to check my stats?

DM: [With some trepidation reaches for sheet.] Umm, Hani, how did you get 75 on 3d6?

Gary: Just lucky I guess. Look you said his roll of 25 was a bit low so I just..

DM: Hani, he was rolling for exceptional strength ...

Gary: Oh. I'll just try again.

DM: Anyway what system are you using?

Gary: The old 6d6, six times and reorder - for twelve characters, then take the best of each. Actually I've got a computer program to do this. I got one of the guys to do a mathematical analysis and he told me how to write a program for rolling up using that system.

DM: It's not very standard and it's horrifically unbalanced ...

Gary: ...Yeah. I wondered about that. He said 'You may as well just have straight 18's.' But that's how I've been generating characters for ages now so ...

DM: NO. You are not having straight eighteens. Roll 4d6 and reorder. It's standard, it's quick and it works.

[Hani proceeds to do so while the others finish of their characters- a Human Fighter and an Elvish Fighter/Thief. After a while Hani's character V3 comes back ...]

DM: Okay, let's have a look at this ... hmmm ... very high ... but alright ... hey what? Hang on a sec ... what is this? A 24, how did you get a 24 of 3d6 ... NO! Wait! Don't tell me ... Let me guess, I said 4d6 and reorder, didn't I? Sorry Hani. I meant 'Roll 4d6 and add the highest THREE of the FOUR, and do this six times.

Then reorder them according to your wishes ...'Gary: [Grumpily, snatching sheet back.] Alright. Well why didn't you say so?

[

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE LIKE THIS?

Meanwhile the campaign starts, and it's not long before Player 1 and Player 2 find themselves knee deep in trouble. It's a case of mistaken identity- someone has mistaken Player 2 for one of the Princes of the Empire and kidnapped Player 2 for blackmail purposes, with Player 1 along as his servant...

DM: ... okay, roll a Horsemanship check to see if you manage to role clear of the falling horse ...

Player 1: Okay ... it's a ...

Gary: Okay, I'm ready now. Mr DM, I'm ready. If you'll just check my sheet I'll start ...

DM: Hold on a moment and I'll introduce you ...

Player 1: my check needs to be ...

Gary: No, that's okay, I'm ready now.

DM: Hold on, this is an important bit, if he doesn't make this he may die.

Gary: Look I don't care. I'll come in and save him.

Player 1: Damn! I failed, sorry [Looking at Player 2], looks like I stuffed up ...

Player 2: Not to worry, just try and survive ...

DM: [Looking at Player 1 then Hani, consideringly ...] Hmmm ... Hani your character. You were a goatherd who ...

Gary: I'm playing a fighter.

DM: ... learnt how to fight watching goats, and you grew up in the mountains ...

Gary: I'm also a mage.

DM: ... very near the city, and your just heading up the ...

Gary: It's also a cleric.

DM: [Pauses for a moment, stony faced.] They were very religious goats. Anyway you're heading up the mountains, and you just come over the rise in time to see a horse, out of control heading towards the nearby cliff with [points to Player 1] dangling precariously from the saddle.

Gary: Alright! A little action at last. I draw my sword and charge it!

DM: The person looks like he is in enough trouble already ... he might be grateful if you saved him ... he looks wealthy ...

Gary: Great! Money to be made when I loot ...

DM: You see this rather wild looking individual bearing down on you as you tumble from the horse. [Looking at Hani] The person falls from the horse ...

Gary: ATTACK ...!

Please note that 'Gary' has no connection whatsoever with Gary™ Gygax. Whatsoever.

Jeremy Nelson

THE OOPS PAGE - SINS OF OMISSION

This is the page that the Publications person gets to put in, because all the grand plans for this PR have just gone out the window...!

Due to some unbelievable stuff-ups on my part (your hard disk WILL fail - it is a matter of time - bet on it, and backup backup backup!), the theft of the Macintosh computers I was using, certain parts of this PR haven't made it to print. Many other articles are not quite as their authors intended - they have been 'fixed'

from a rather leaky memory - thus I claim responsibility for any increase in readability (or vice versa!).

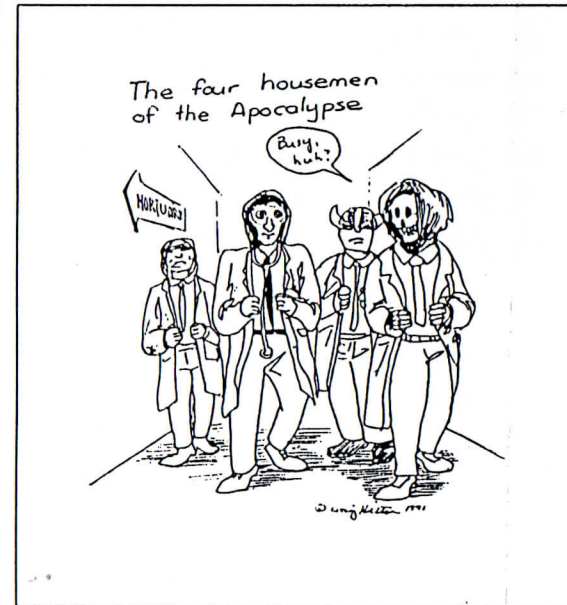
Notwithstanding the terrible disasters

that have befallen this PR, (ha!) I'd like to specially thank Craig Hilton who provided all of the great illos for the PR, Tara for the annoying MS-DOS files, and of course Sally

and Dave for their huge amount of patience.

In any case, I really would like to solicit for articles, stories, fact, fiction, cartoons, advertisements. If you know of anyone who might be interested in submitting their creations,

hassle them. These PRs shouldn't be anything more than special-purpose fanzines, and it'd be good to get some more diverse items to print.



SWANCON 18 SUPPORTS PRESUPPORTERS

If you took out a pre-supporting membership you will get a \$5 discount off the full membership rate at the time of the upgrade.

At the present full membership rate of \$50 you pay only another \$40 (\$50 - \$5 presupporting - \$5 discount).

So update now - the rate goes up after Easter 1992!

VENUE OF THE APOCALYPSE

The Ascot Inn Convention Centre is a wonderful venue for the 1993 NatCon, lurking as it does by the banks of the Swan River in the Perth suburb of Belmont. There is a good bistro, restaurant and bar conveniently located in the complex. It's just a few blocks from the Great Eastern Highway which joins the airport with the central business district of Perth, which has a regular bus service, and lots of fast-food shops.

The rooms cost \$65 per night, are of a good motel quality, and sleep 2 or 3

people, although most (by this point, possibly all) of the three-bed rooms have already been booked. Each room has 'light' cooking facilities.

Although SwanCon 18 has booked all of the rooms in the Ascot it looks like we will run out in the near future, so unless you wish to stay in one of the motels up at the highway, book soon.

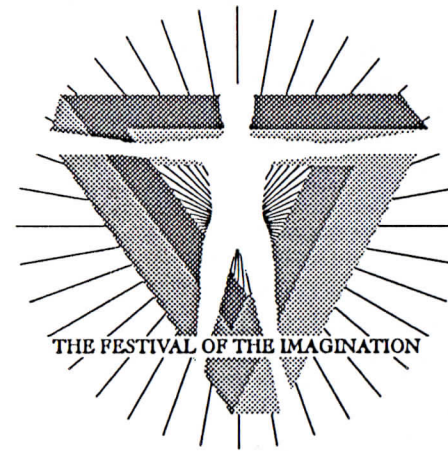
With the frequent price-wars, now may be the best time to book your airfare.

UPCOMING CONVENTIONS

SynCon '91: 13-15 December 1991, at St. Andrew's College, Sydney University. Theme: Future Directions, High Tech. GoH: Wynne Whiteford. Rates: \$35. Address: PO Box 462, Newtown 2042

SwanCon 17: 24-27 January, at Ascot Inn, Belmont, Perth. GoH: Terry Dowling and Nick Stathopoulos. Rates: \$45 attending, \$15 supporting until 1 Nov 91. Address: PO Box 227, North Perth 6006

The Contract: St Valentine's Day (February) 1992 in the Adelaide Hills. GoH: John Foyster. Address: c/- Roman Orsanski, PO Box 131, Marden 5070



SwanCon 17

The Major Festival Event

Terry Dowling Nick Stathopoulos
Paul Kidd ("Albedo", "Lace&Steel")
Sean McMullen Lucy Sussex
Philippa Maddern Grant Stone

If you thought SynCon was the only
Australian National SF Event in 1992
You may be in for a shock!

January 24-27 1992 Ascot Inn Convention Centre, Epson Ave. Belmont
Attending \$45 Supporting \$15 PO Box 227 NORTH PERTH WA 6006

HAVE YOU BOOKED FOR THE APOCALYPSE?

1	Terry Pratchett UK	GOH	40	Doug Miles WA	pre
2	Craig Hilton WA	FGOH	41	Paul Verdi WA	
3	Gigi Boudville WA	c	42	Graham Chow WA	
4	Peter Burns VIC	pre	43	Owen Wylde WA	pre
5	Henry Chartroop NSW	pre	44	Paul Ashfield WA	pre
6	Jeanette Tipping VIC	pre	45	Guy Dyson WA	
7	Margaret Hilliard NSW	pre	46	Julia Gosling WA	pre
8	Sally Beasley WA	c	47	Ken McCaw WA	pre
9	Dave Luckett WA	c	48	Kevin McCaw WA	
10	Ralph Smith WA	pre	49	Shelley McCaw WA	
11	Tara Smith WA	c	50	Barbara van den Berg WA	
12	Lawrence Brown ACT	supp	51	Gary Luckman NSW	pre
13	Micheal Goh WA	pre	52	Eric B Lindsay NSW	
14	Michelle Hallett NSW		53	Danny Heap VIC	supp
15	John Newman VIC	pre	54	Peter Lyons WA	
16	Martin Livings WA	pre	55	Rod Kearins NSW	
17	Nick Robinson WA	pre	56	Kevin MacLean NSW	
18	David Yeates WA	pre	57	Ted Andrews VIC	
19	Denis Pack WA		58	Ian A Kerr VIC	
20	Iain Henderson WA	pre	59	Garfield Barnard NSW	supp
21	Susan Margaret WA		60	Dianne De Bellis NSW	supp
22	Danny Varney WA	pre	61	Sarah Murray-White NSW	
23	Gary Hoff WA		62	LynC LynC VIC	
24	Cath Ortlieb VIC	pre	63	Clive Newall VIC	
25	Julia Bateman WA	pre	64	Roger Weddall VIC	
26	Ken A Moylan ACT	pre	65	Doug Burbidge WA	
27	Van Ikin WA	pre	66	Richard Scriven WA	supp
28	Marjory Ikin WA	pre	67	Shell Templar WA	supp
29	Kohan Ikin WA	pre	68	Adam McCaw WA	child
30	Mark Bivens WA	c	69	Ian Gunn VIC	
31	Eugene Roseveare WA	pre	70	Karen Pender-Gunn VIC	
32	Kate Langford WA		71	Alan Stewart VIC	
33	Brad Smart WA	pre	72	Stephen Wroth WA	
34	Sue Ann Barber WA	pre	73	Greg Turkich WA	supp
35	John Parker WA		74	Jeremy Byrne WA	supp
36	Jay Stratton WA	pre	75	Peter Cooper WA	c
37	Damien Kneale	pre	76	Jan Smith WA	
38	Larry Dunning WA	pre	77	Melissa Henson WA	
39	Carol Wood WA	pre	78	Cathy Cupitt WA	