

**AUSTRALIAN**



**NEWS**

*Special Issue 5*

*October 2004*

**News**

**Reviews**

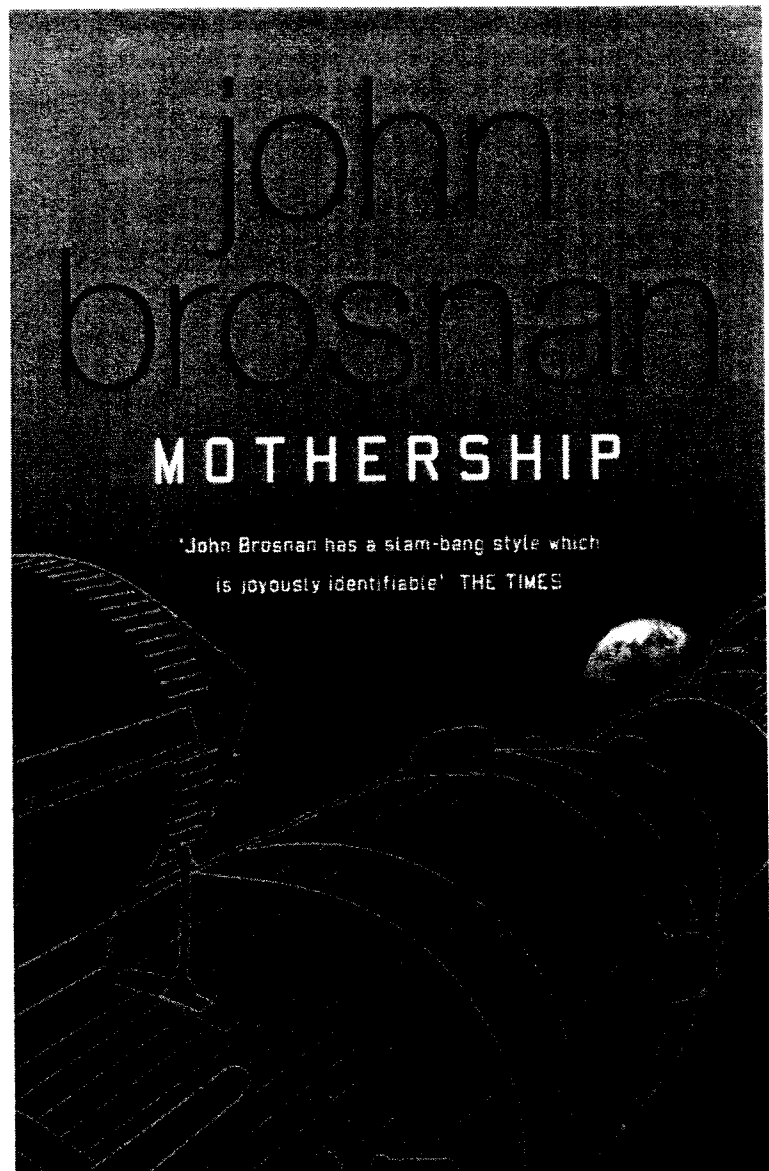
and  
**A LISTING**  
of

**SCIENCE  
FICTION**

**FANTASY**

**&**

**HORROR**



**BOOKS RELEASED IN AUSTRALIA**

## AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS SPECIAL ISSUE 5

OCTOBER 2004

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Dear Readers,

I have been catching up with some super science space opera books recently with Vernor Vinge's *A Deepness in the Sky*, Sean Williams and Shane Dix's *Evergence* and *Orphans* trilogies. More recently Alastair Reynolds *Revelation Space*, *Chasm City*, *Redemption Ark* (which we had to borrow from Alan to read as the publishers did not send us one) and currently the fourth in the sequence *Absolution Gap*. Wow! Helena's reviews will appear herein, but I will just add that they are great stuff that I am enjoying them very much. We are still receiving lots of fantasy volumes, which I do not have the time to read, but I will continue to list them all for my readers. Many will be reviewed in our companion zine *THYME*. As for the SF, we will endeavour to read and review or at least mention in some detail, all the books publishers send us. One non SF title I will mention is our friend Jack Dann's novel based on the life that "might have been" of movie star James Dean, if he had not been killed in a car accident. A May release by Harper Collins.

## CONVENTIONS

I just worked out roughly how many SF conventions I have attended and it is over forty. That probably pales into insignificance compared to many American fans, as there are more cons to attend each year, but I do not think that I have done too badly during my fifty years in fandom in Australia. I have missed a lot in other places than Melbourne, due to what has been my financial situation over the last twenty years or so, but it is good to know that we will be having one in Melbourne probably every year from now on. At least I know that CONTINUUM III will be the 2005 one, having just attended CONTINUUM II over the Queen's Birthday holiday weekend June 12 to 14. THYLACON III, the 2005 National Australian SF Convention, being held in Hobart, Tasmania, has picked the Queen's Birthday weekend and as you know Helena and I will be attending. So CONTINUUM III will be held later on July 15-17 and Helena and I will be attending that also, having hopefully recovered from the Tassie trip.

AND how did CONTINUUM II go? Each con we attend we see less of our very old friends, but we are getting to know more of the current Melbourne SF Club members.



PETER McNAMARA (centre) with TERRY DOWLING (left) and SEAN McMULLEN (RIGHT) after the 1991 Ditmar Awards

I was sorry to learn at Continuum 2 that my Adelaide friend **PETER McNAMARA** had passed away recently. He had made it to Continuum 1 last year and I was pleased to say hello. Peter published the magazine *APHELION* for which I provided my modest history of SF in Australia articles, for which Peter actually paid me, being the only thing that I have written that I was ever recompensed for. Following the demise of the magazine Peter continued to foster Australian SF writing and publishing with his Aphelion Books, in which he gave Sean McMullen his start and others including Terry Dowling. I believe that he was still editing and encouraging writers right up to the last. It is fitting that **The Mac** award has been established in Peter's honour.

It would appear that Danny Oz (Heap), who has been involved with Melbourne SF cons I would guess for about ten years, is a driving force in our current Melbourne SF cons organisation along with many other MSFC members. Bill Wright was busy urging everyone to contribute to the fan fund for Bruce Gillespie to attend CORFLU Fanzine Convention in San Francisco next February 2005, while Bruce himself was selling copies of *THE INCOMPLETE BRUCE GILLESPIE*, which is a collection of some Bruce's best articles from his zines, selected by Irwin Hirsch, produced to help raise funds for the trip also.

## CONTINUUM

Guests included: Artist EDDIE CAMPBELL who currently has *Batman* and *Captain America* comics due out in the US. He also created the comic book *From Hell*, which in 2001 was made into a movie starring Johnny Depp.



EDDIE CAMPBELL with MC JACK DANN at the opening of CONTINUUM 2, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2004

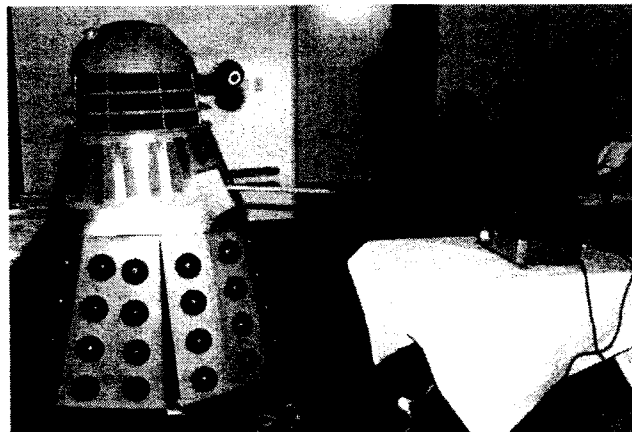
Other professional guests were: Melbourne award winning fantasy author TRUDI CANAVAN, author of *The Black Magician Trilogy*, who is working on another trilogy tentatively titled *The Age of Five Gods*. MAX BARRY is a full-time writer whose novels include *Syrup* and *Jennifer Government*, the latter being developed as a movie for George Clooney. Melbourne fan DEREK SCREEN was Fan GoH, and he has been heavily involved in media fandom in such clubs as Austrek, Starwalking, the Dr Who Club of Victoria, the MSFC and more including the very successful, now disbanded organisation Multiverse. Other invited guests included Morgan Evans – stunt actor, director and producer. Stephen Schutze – music composer and audio expert who won a Game Developer's Award for the score for the game *Jurassic Park Operation Genesis*. Dillon Naylor – artist, cartoonist and designer. Graeme Farmer - New Zealand radio and TV writer. Chris Roache – Film and TV script writer and developer. Pat McMurray – The GUFF fan fund delegate from England, who has helped organise conventions including next year's 2005 World Con in Glasgow.



Authors JENNY BLACKFORD (left) and JACK DANN (right) entertain the audience with anecdotes about 'the Encyclopaedia Man' PETER NICHOLLS (centre).

The Opening Ceremony featuring **Danny Oz** and the guests, was made memorable by a voluble **Jack Dann**, who in due course introduced the first program item featuring the "Encyclopedia Man" **Peter Nicholls**. The achievements of this Melbourne man, editor of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, were celebrated by Russell Blackford, Jenny Blackford, Jack Dann, Janeen Webb and Andrew Macrae, and Peter's wife Clare Coney. Peter was very active in the SF field in England for quite a few years but is now settled down in Melbourne with his family.

The rest of the first evening dealt mainly with an introduction to fandom, the con and the MSFC, along with a cocktail party and the "**Super Robot Happy Hour**", the successor to last year's "Mega Panel", featuring the wisecracking match-making Robot, with entertaining satirical presentations by some quirky humourists, and the Return of The Dalek, which terrorized the audience into a state of quivering hilarity.



The SUPER ROBOT HAPPY HOUR

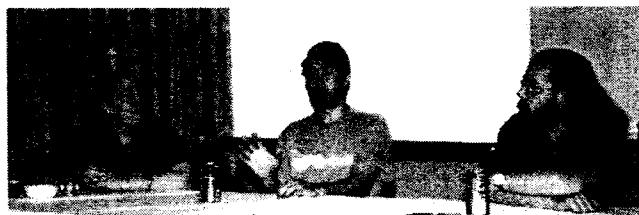
It is evident that these conventions have become a forum for the local authors to get together and talk about their work and to encourage and advise other authors. We were only mildly interested in that, but we managed to find other items of particular or passing interest during the con.

On the Saturday we attended **THE FERMI PARADOX** panel which discussed the SETI Project and the possibility of alien contact.



THE FERMI PARADOX panel. From left: PETER FAGAN, CHRIS LAWSON, RUSSELL BLACKFORD and JON SWABEY

**VIRTUAL VS REALITY STUNTS** featured stuntman Morgan Evans, who talked about his work on *The Lord of the Rings* and other movies. He and his fellow panelists also discussed the advantages and disadvantages of live action and CGI techniques of dealing with action/adventure scenes.



ALISON BARTON, stuntman guest MORGAN EVANS and DANNY OZ discuss VIRTUAL VS REALITY STUNTS

A panel on amateur film making featured some spectacular and colourful short films. Not fan films such as the "A '75" World Con bid movie that we made back in 1973, but attempts to make SF and fantasy movies, many costing not insignificant amounts of money.



RUSSELL DEVLIN and DARREN MAXWELL presented a choice selection of amateur movie epics.

We returned from dinner in time to catch the latter part of Robert Jan's "Zero-G Hour of Frightfulness", a humorous presentation of musical highlights and lowlights from his radio show (ZERO-G on 3RRR, Tuesdays from 1PM).



ROB JAN'S "ZERO-G HOUR OF FRIGHTFULNESS"

Sean McMullen spoke about the historic background to the development of computers and related it to his own story writing and that of others in **THE COMPUTER AGE OF THE PAST**.



SEAN McMULLEN (in a pose that could belong in a Renaissance painting) expounds on the background to modern computing, including the work of nineteenth century mathematician Ada Lovelace (on screen), who did the calculations for the operation of inventor Charles Babbage's "Difference Engine" (a mechanical precursor of electronic calculators and computers).

In the night program our main interest was a panel on **THE LORD OF THE RINGS: The Book Vs The Film**, with authors Richard Harland, Russell Kirkpatrick (NZ author of *Across The Face of the World*, first in an epic fantasy trilogy, which is being compared by Voyager to *LotR*), Kirstyn McDermott and others. It confirmed my opinion that the movie must be viewed as a separate entity to the book, as movies must have a wide appeal to viewers and must be looked at and judged as a movie. Whatever, the visual aspects of the movie makes it even more enjoyable to read the book, as the scenes in the movie will always be in my mind's eye.

Following the earnest discussion of TLoTR was a panel on (of all things at a science fiction convention!) **SPORT**, presented by a panel of sports enthusiasts, Trevor Clark, Ian Mond and Aaron Jacks, with lifelong sports hater Bruce Gillespie weighing in for the opposition as the "Devil's Advocate".



THE LORD OF THE RINGS panel.  
From left: RUSSELL KIRKPATRICK, KELVIN WELBOURN, KIRSTYN McDERMOTT, JON SWABEY and RICHARD HARLAND

The Sports panel was enlivened by breaks in which Ian received live phone reports from Sarah Marland at the AFL football *Essendon vs Brisbane* match taking place that evening.



IAN MOND, BRUCE GILLESPIE and AARON JACKS agree to disagree on the subject of Sport

Following the Sports panel, an interesting talk by **Ian Mond**, with Aaron Jacks, about his enthusiasms for SF, sport and other things in relationship to his Orthodox Jewish faith and traditional lifestyle (managing the inevitable conflicts of interests at times entailing a delicate balancing act), was the last thing we attended that evening.

On Sunday, **Morgan Evans** talked about being a stunt double for *LotR* and other movies, and we listened to Russell Blackford on **AIs**.

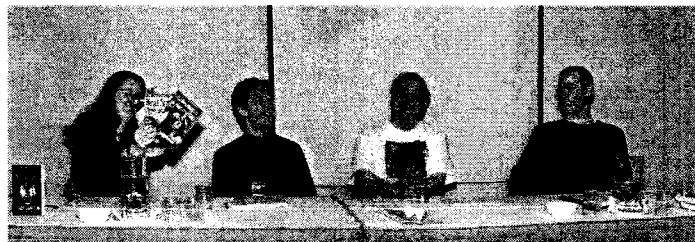


The AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL AND THE FLYING CAR panel.

There were other panels and discussions on creating comic books, and Gothic Movies rather than horror. We missed panels on Dr Who and why do authors keep on writing the Dreaded Trilogies, but we did catch AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL IN THE AGE OF FLYING CARS with Trevor Clarke and Andrew Macrae. They decided that what we have seen of flying vehicles as numerous as cars in movies such as *Blade Runner* and *The Fifth Element* is unlikely to eventuate.

Bruce Gillespie and panel spoke about Bruce's enduring interest, the life and work of SF author **PHILIP K. DICK**. They did not overlook the irony that so many movies of recent years (*Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, *Minority Report*, *Paycheck*) have been based on his work, with other people reaping the financial rewards that he never attained.

Max Barry and Zara Baxter spoke about **e-BOOKS** and if they will have any effect on "books" as we know them.

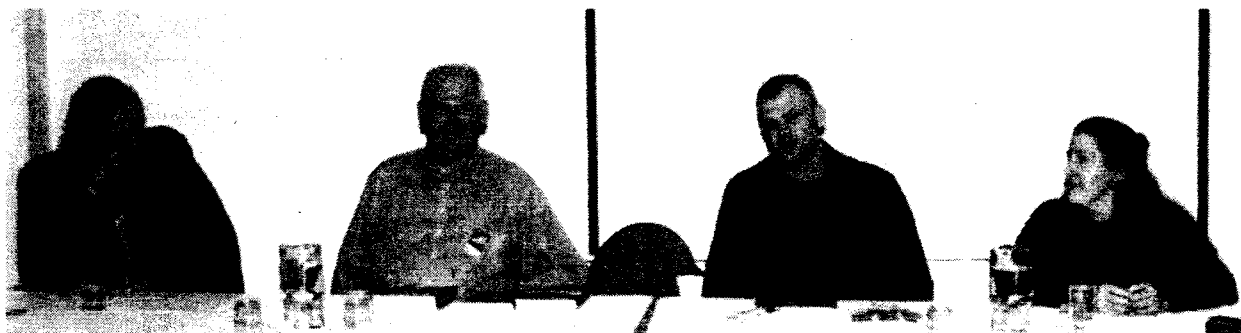


Authors TRUDI CANAVAN, GEORGE IVANOFF, RICHARD HARLAND and MAX BARRY share their experiences at the Publishing panel.

The **ORB Speculative Fiction** magazine launch began the evening, but we had to miss that and the following **MASKOBOLO** party, even though the costumes have always been one of the major highlights of any convention for both of us. Helena, who'd woken with migraines both Saturday and Sunday and still wasn't feeling too well, just wasn't up to waiting around for hours then facing music at the pain threshold. So despite our regret at not seeing the evening's costumes, we left the "kids" to enjoy the loud music and dancing. I have always enjoyed cons and meeting people at them, even when the program has held limited interest for me. Helena and I had enjoyed this one, even though we found that the number of our old friends attending was diminishing. But neither of us felt up to attending the Monday program. Enough was enough! We were both tuckered out and we reckoned it was appropriate for us to scoot off home So we said goodbye to Danny and friends and went home for dinner and watched *SHREK* on the box, which Helena had not seen.

**MERV BINNS**

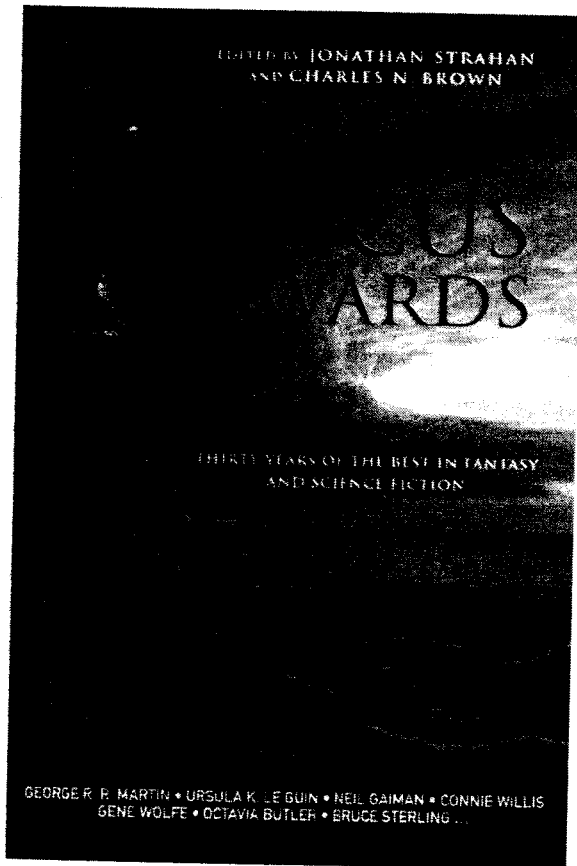
(Photos by Helena Binns)



Above: The PHILIP K. DICK panel. JON SWABEY, BRUCE GILLESPIE, ANDREW MACRAE and ALISON BARTON

## BOOKS RECEIVED

After a long wait, HARPER COLLINS finally sent me the last book in the *Orphans* trilogy by Williams and Dix having previously sent me the first two, but as is the way of publishers I had to actually buy volumes one and two of the *Evergence* sequence. At any rate, it was worth the wait.



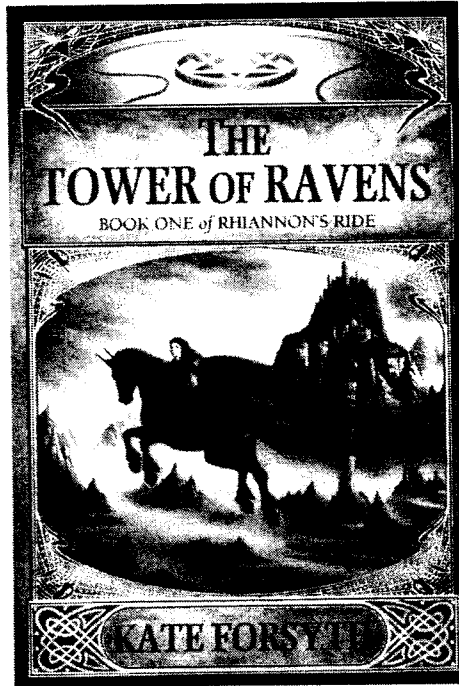
Having been lovers of *The Lord of the Rings* and enjoying the movie versions, we were very pleased to receive a copy of *The Lord of the Rings Weapons and Warfare* by Chris Smith (Harper Collins). A superbly illustrated hard cover which outlines the whole story and all the characters, places, weapons and much more, with illustrations from the movies and conceptual art work for costumes and such. Whether you liked the movies or not, as some died in the wool fans did not, the "look" of the movie was really superb and here is a record in book form. A trade pb received titled *ACROSS THE FACE OF THE WORLD* by Russell Kirkpatrick (Voyager), is billed as rivaling *LotR*. It is the first in a sequence titled *Fire of the Heaven*. It may not quite live up to comparison, but it certainly does seem to be an outstanding title in the numerous fantasy novels being published. *KILLSWITCH* by Joel Shepherd is the third in this SF adventure series featuring the character Casandar Kresnov, which bear some comparison to P. K. D's *Bladerunner*, Voyager pb. *GILFEATHER* is by Glenda Larke, a Western Australian born author, now living in Malaysia. It is the second book in *The Isles of Glory* fantasy sequence, in Voyager pb.

A large paperback edited by Jonathan Strahan and Charles N. Brown received titled *THE LOCUS AWARDS* is an anthology of Fantasy and SF. It collects the best short stories as *Locus* magazine readers saw them over a period of thirty years. A collection of tales by Harlan Ellison and other authors, who all make us sit up and take notice. *GODS OF THE INFERNO* by Fletcher Anthony is the second title in the *Inheritors* prehistoric fantasy sequence, set in Java, Voyager pb. The second volume in New Zealand author Russell Kirkpatrick's fantasy saga *Fire in the Heaven*, which began with *Across the Face of the World* is due out in September from Voyager. The title is *IN THE EARTH ABIDES THE FLAME* and it is published in large format pb. An outstanding fantasy quest adventure tale, seemingly above the average in the great number of fantasy novels being published. *GOD'S CONCUBINE* by Sara Douglas is in the *Troy Game* sequence, book two. This September release large format paperback is by an outstanding author whose knowledge of real history enables her to add meat to a great epic story telling ability.

Last year we received from RANDOM HOUSE Australia, *QUICKSILVER* by Neal Stephenson, in large format pb (William Heinemann). Publication followed, but it is a prequel to the very impressive *CRYPTONOMICON*. Helena was very impressed with both and was very pleased to receive the next in *The Baroque Cycle*, *THE CONFUSION*, (W. Heinemann tpb). Historical fiction but with a theme of science and philosophy related with an intriguing style. Many fantasy readers love dragons and *ERAGON* by Christopher Paolini is a tale of the relationship of a young man and a dragon, who unite to defeat an evil ruler. (Doubleday TPB). David Gemmell's *White Wolf, Book One of the Damned*, was released in small pb along with the a novel of *Skilgannon the Damned*, *THE SWORDS OF NIGHT AND DAY* in tpb (Bantam Press). Recent new mum, Aussie author Kate Forsyth starts a new fantasy sequence,

*Rhiannon's Ride* with *THE TOWER OF RAVENS* in tpb. The *Discworld* saga continues with *A HAT FULL OF SKY* by who else but Terry Pratchett, due out in May in (Doubleday) hc. *PRISONER OF IRONSEA TOWER* is Book Two of *The Towers of Artamon* by Sarah Ash. A fantasy saga of war, royal intrigue and magic.



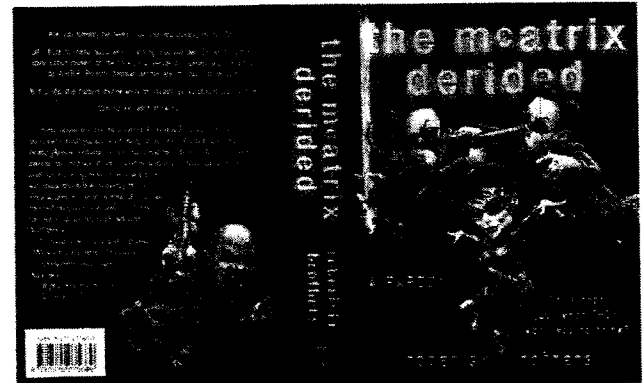


From ALLEN & UNWIN Australia we have received a new updated edition of Terry Pratchett and Stephen Briggs' *THE DISCWORLD COMPANION* in small pb (Gollancz). In hard cover from Gollancz we have a new Ursula K. LeGuin novel, *CHANGING PLANES* which is a spoof on air travel and appears to be something quite different to what we expect from this acclaimed author. One of the most impressive new writers of "big" space novels is British author Alastair Reynolds. We have received recently *ABSOLUTION GAP* which follows *Revelation Space*, *Chasm City* and *Redemption Ark*. Helena has read them all and loves them, so I am currently, having read the first three titles, reading the last mentioned. A book that I can only categorise as political or a financial world fantasy is *MARKET FORCES* by Richard Morgan, set in a nasty near future where financial institutions encourage and

make big money out of wars, in Gollancz tpb. Another title that is also not strictly SF, which I would put rather in the techno-thriller adventure category, ala Tom Clancy, is *TYPHOON* by Robin White. Deals with a supposedly decommissioned giant Russian submarine that has gone missing. *THE YEAR OF OUR WAR* by Steph Swainston is a very original fantasy novel that gets away from the usual



sagas with characters out for revenge or saving their land from evil, but this novel features some unusual characters in a surreal environment. VG tpb. American author Sheri Tepper's SF novel *THE COMPANIONS* is set on a sentient planet that may be a new home for Earth's animals which Earth's government has decreed must all be destroyed. But will the new world, Mossen allow the relocation to take place, VG tpb. I wanted to read this title, but found the type face so small that it was too difficult for me to tackle. Expatriate Aussie John Brosnan has now been resident in England for quite a few years, while sometimes literary partner John Baxter is ensconced in France. With this new title, *MOTHERSHIP*, John has had four books published by Gollancz and more by other publishers. This novel depicts a long space journey with the remains of Earth's population living on a nine thousand mile long spaceship. And as if things are not bad enough with despotic leaders in charge, they are being replaced by an alien something from elsewhere. The movies in the *Matrix* series were very spectacular, but did they make much sense? Well, a writer under



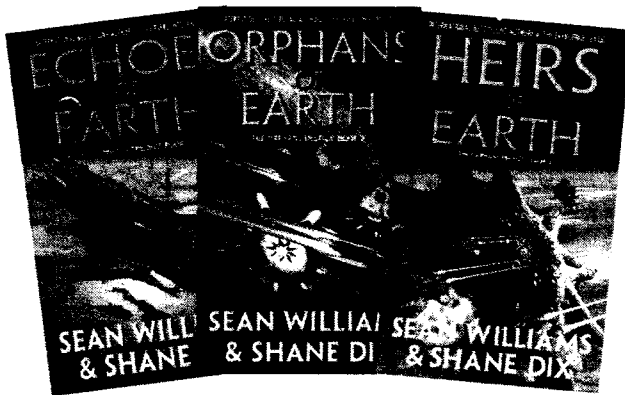
the name of The Robertski Brothers takes the mickey out of them with *THE MCATRIX DERIDED*, a small format hc published by Gollancz, due out here from Allen and Unwin in August. If ever anything merited parodying the *Matrix* certainly cries out for it. Two SF masters in Arthur Clarke and Stephen Baxter have got together to produce *TIME'S EYE* which is the first in a sequence titled *A Time Odyssey*. Time is all getting mixed up with people from our past appearing and doing their thing, which is changing every thing as we know it. Alien influence on Earth is just beginning to become evident and indications are that its future may be very short. Two techno-thrillers received were *DEEP BLACK* and *DEEP BLACK: BIO WAR* by Stephen Coonts and Jim Defelice, in Orion large format pbs.

A rare entry from MACMILLAN is *WEAPONS OF CHOICE* by Aussie author John Birmingham whose reputation hinges on the title *He Died With A Felafel in His Hand*. It is about a trip back in time to the war in the Pacific Ocean in 1942. In the Kirk Douglas and Martin Sheen movie *Final Countdown*, the time travellers do influence the past to some degree without directly taking part in the conflict but in this tale the characters become involved, with disastrous consequences. A hard cover due out in July 2004.



## BOOKS WE HAVE READ

REVIEWS by Merv Binns



*The ORPHANS Trilogy: ECHOES OF EARTH, ORPHANS OF EARTH, AND HEIRS OF EARTH, by Sean Williams and Shane Dix (Voyager Paperbacks)*

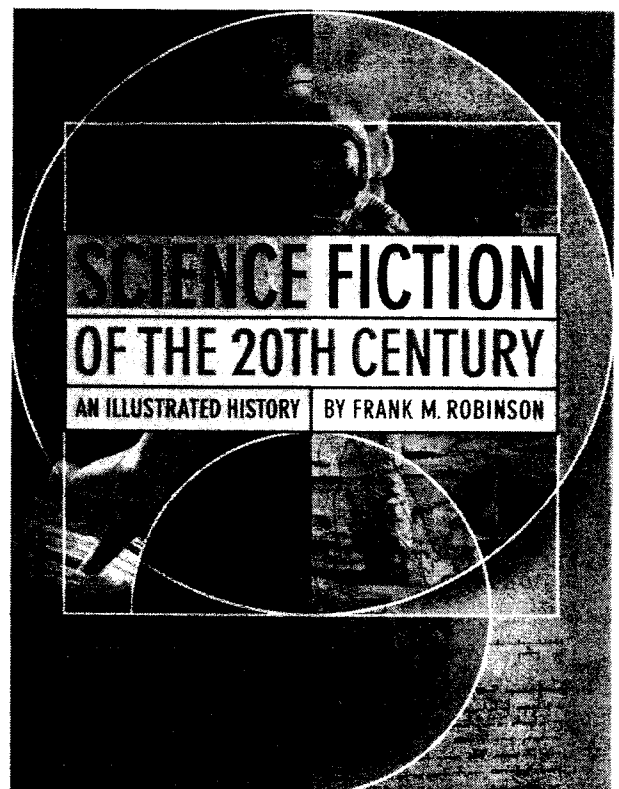
Having read these authors' first SF trilogy, *The Evergence* and enjoying it to a large degree, I was expecting this lot to be more of the same, but although they are also set on a very large canvas in the vast reaches of space, it is an entirely new story. Both series exhibit the authors love of super science and I feel that they have been influenced by the golden age of SF when the science overwhelmed the characters. However although they are no doubt very well versed in present day astronomy and in particular the cyber revolution and make the most of their knowledge, almost blinding us with gimmickry all of which I love, the interplay and personal problems of the characters is not ignored.

The somewhat insignificance of the human race in the enormous scheme of things in the universe is a major theme of the tales, plus the idea that the electronic machines may take us into the next step in human evolution. The pseudo humans, electronic copies of real people, who can exist for a very long time, if not forever, are sent out to explore "where no man has gone before" and are virtually able to spend as long as it may take. They finish up having the future of the human race in their hands and must contend with some very nasty alien life forms and the super, super science they have to confront and adapt to. As each seemingly insurmountable situation develops more incredible things happen to save them, perhaps a little bit too easy, but as a space opera and a *Star Trek* lover of long standing, I am quite used to that.

So I believe these two blokes have come up with a space opera format that is equal to anything I have read recently in American or British writing. SF adventure at its best but if you do not like this sort of stuff this is not for you. I loved it and particularly the

"science" which takes present day knowledge, which these guys are obviously well versed in, to some way out but entertaining conclusions. My only beef, about both trilogies actually, was that I was not entirely satisfied with the final outcomes, but then how many authors do seem to run out of ideas towards the end of their tales.

There has now been published a number of illustrated books that have endeavoured to give a history and/or reference to science fiction literature and movies. John Clute's *SCIENCE FICTION ENCYCLOPEDIA ILLUSTRATED* being the best visually with lots of authors photos, book covers, movie scenes and all, but I still found it hard to find details in it that I wanted. For pure reference you cannot beat Don Tuck's *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, the detail on authors and their works is unsurpassed, but unfortunately it only covers up to the 1960s. Peter Nicholls *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* is more up to date and very useful. And there are more illustrated books that I could remind you of, but I digress.



*SCIENCE FICTION OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY An Illustrated History* compiled by Frank M. Robinson, published by *The Collector's Press*, is not an encyclopedia or intended I believe as a reference. It is simply a beautifully illustrated nostalgic romp through the SF field from its beginnings with the pulp magazines, showing reproductions of covers of a well chosen range of the zines and books, with notes and anecdotes with each illustration about the editors or authors, the stories and more.



It is a great souvenir for all of us who have lived through the better part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and been readers of SF, and have been a part of fandom. Robinson sums it all up beautifully in a chapter headed *The Death of Science Fiction* – well as we know it at any rate. How we fans all discovered SF, how we share interests in so many other associated things such as space exploration, how we were regarded as nuts by other people and all. SF has now more or less become part of the mainstream Frank points out to us but as I see it, far from dying it is now part of literature the same as any other category. I enjoy having this book to read and browse through again and again and regard it as a gem in my SF collection.

I just read Frank Robinson's novel *A Darkness Beyond the Stars*, another galactic voyage tale, which is great but a little less over the top than Alastair Reynolds epics.

**MERV BINNS**

**REVIEWS by Helena Binns:**

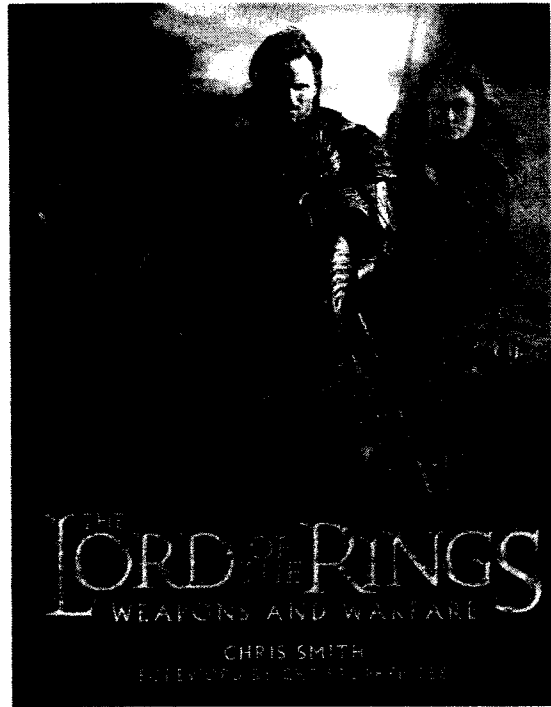
***The Lord of the Rings  
WEAPONS AND WARFARE***

by Chris Smith. (Harper Collins). Hardcover

"The Official Illustrated Guide to the Battles, Arms and Armies in *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy".

The Trilogy referred to is the movie one, of course, and this handsome, splendidly designed volume is lavishly illustrated with photos from Peter Jackson's epics, as well as sketches by the movie artists. It is embellished with decorative maps, borders and page headings based on Tolkien's own artwork.

Part of the appeal of Tolkien's books was in their wealth of descriptive detail, and the movie's artists and designers attempted wherever possible to remain faithful to Tolkien's descriptions of weapons and armour and military uniforms. At the same time they drew upon the historical record of weapons and military paraphernalia from the real medieval periods of many nations, and incorporated them skillfully into designs appropriate to the various races and individuals Tolkien described. The depth of their research and their attention to detail was remarkable, and resulted in the look of authenticity and credibility that was sustained throughout the three films. Fascinating though it is, the creative process involved in the production of the movie artefacts is not described in this book (although it is in the additional material in the extended DVD versions of the movies). But its results are presented to the reader as an authentic visual record of the wars and weapons of the Ring trilogy as told by Tolkien and filmed by Peter Jackson.



Chris Smith recounts in absorbing detail the conflicts of Middle Earth and the part each of the major characters played in them, along with detailed descriptions of their costumes, armour, weapons and other accoutrements. Equal credit should go to Terence Craven and Arjen Jansen, acknowledged in very small type at the beginning of the book for its design and production, and all others involved in this. (Artists, designers and model-makers contributing to the making of the movies are also credited.)

**TIME'S EYE**

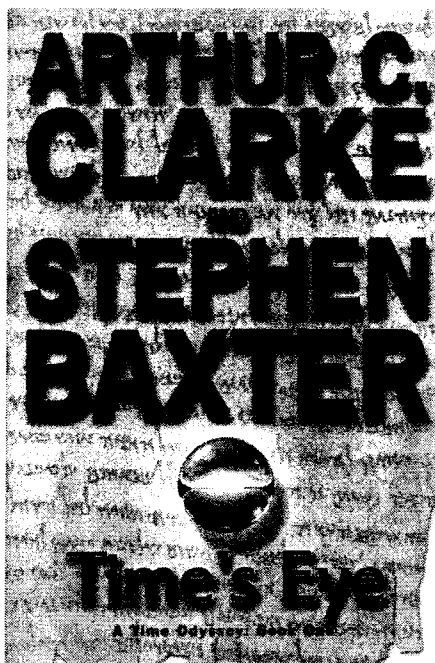
***A Time Odyssey Book One***

by Arthur C. Clarke and Stephen Baxter TPB  
Published 2004 by Gollancz

What a treat! *TIME'S EYE* is a collaboration between the old master of British SF and the new. Each brings his own strengths to the project, and his own idiosyncrasies. The subtitle *A Time Odyssey* gives us a hint that there will be a nod toward Clarke's most famous work, *2001, A Space Odyssey*, and there are a few sly references that bring it to mind. *2001* toyed with the subject of the evolution of the human race, prodded along by alien influences, and some of Baxter's books of recent years have dealt with the same theme, with or without the alien influences, most notably in his great work *Evolution*, which is like a 'docu-drama' vividly depicting humanity's rise from its humblest origins.

In *Time's Eye*, the story starts off from the point of view of a primitive hominid from an unspecified past age. But we are soon introduced to a group of United Nations peacekeepers from about a generation into our own future. Then we meet a group of British soldiers at a remote military outpost on the Northwest Frontier of India in the time of Rudyard Kipling.

(Baxter has a particular fondness for the British explorers and adventurers of the Victorian age, and this is expressed also in *Origin*, the last volume of his *Manifold* trilogy.)



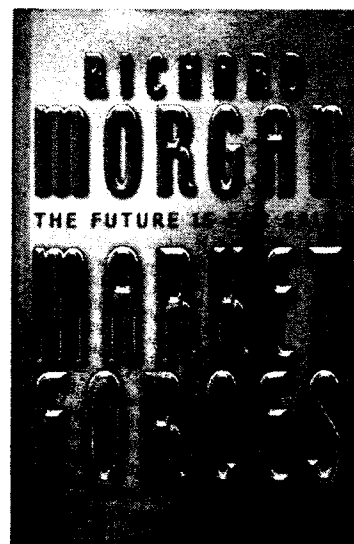
The reader quickly catches on that these two groups of characters (and the hominid) are destined to meet. However, as it turns out, that is just the beginning. Pretty soon things become even more complicated. So begins an odyssey indeed – a perilous journey across a world shattered by some unimaginable power that has seemingly capriciously unmade the Earth and put it back together in such a way that the concept of time as we know it no longer makes any sense. We share the characters' bewilderment as they gradually comprehend and come to terms with what is going on. It is a wondrous but alienating and often terrifying adventure, played out under the baleful gaze of the perpetually watchful 'Eye'. This volume finishes on a 'cliff-hanger' of sorts, and I can't wait for the next one.

**MARKET FORCES** by Richard Morgan TPB  
Published 2004 by Gollancz

MARKET FORCES is a nasty tale set in a near future world ruled by – well, *market forces*, at least in Europe and America and all their spheres of influence. Following a series of crushing recessions affecting all countries, Russia and China have fallen by the way as major players, driven into bankruptcy. The governments of Britain and the U.S.A. have survived, but as tools of the multi-national corporations, allowing them to do more or less whatever they want, including determine social policy.

In Europe, the Scandinavian countries cling to the remnants of their more equitable social systems and try, largely to no avail, to appeal to the consciences of the governments of other countries to do the same. In the U.S.A. and in Britain, where this sorry saga is set, the rich get richer, those fortunate enough to have jobs struggle to survive and the poor sink into ever more abject poverty. Cars are luxury items owned only by the wealthy, including high-level executives and management. Big corporations engage not only in commerce but also in the new field of "conflict investment" – supplying arms and intelligence to factions in volatile third-world nations, trusting their judgement to back a winner and reap profitable returns from future dealings with them. One of these companies is Shorn Associates, a firm at which the central character of this story (one hesitates to call him the "hero", for reasons which emerge as time goes by) Chris Faulkner, wins a position as a senior executive.

In Morgan's nightmare future, the aggressive struggle to climb to the top of the money tree has exceeded the parameters of any present-day definition of a power struggle. Executives engage not only in figurative backstabbing but the literal kind. They are not only permitted but



encouraged to challenge one another to duel for contested positions. Their weapons of choice are their exclusive executive toys – their cars. Once a symbol of power and prestige, these have become custom-made "battle wagons" designed for formalized contests in which two drivers try to run one another off the near-deserted roads. Finishing off one's defeated opponent is not only allowed, it is encouraged, and the law allows it as long as it takes place within the rules of dueling. You can tell right from the beginning that Chris is going to be compelled to make some hard choices. The rest of the book is about how he deals with this, and it won't please everybody. Although the story does have a serious moral message, it tends to get swamped by frequent episodes of graphic violence. This is basically testosterone fiction. It will appeal mainly to those who like brutal, hard-edge action-adventure – and really fast, mean, dangerous cars.

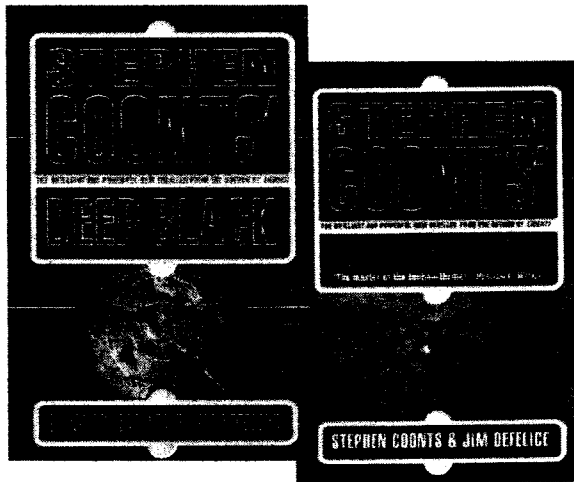
Why do English authors generally come up with such depressing visions of the future? Is it the weather, or what?

**DEEP BLACK and DEEP BLACK: BIOWAR**

By Stephen Coonts and Jim DeFelice

TPB

Published by Orion



These two books are techno-thrillers set in the very near future. *DEEP BLACK*, as the name implies, is about covert operations – run, in this case, by a secret government agency using ultra high-tech methods. (The current TV series *Threat Matrix* is another example of this type of thing.) In *Deep Black*, we are introduced to the agency and to the covert ops team. *Biowar* is another adventure involving mostly the same cast of characters. You have to read *Deep Black* first. One of the main characters is Charles Dean, a Vietnam veteran minding his own business – and running his own business – when he is 'drafted' into the secret service of black ops and is introduced, along with the reader, to its technological intricacies. He finds himself partnered with Lia, the smart, sassy, butt-kicking chick obligatory to any action-adventure yarn these days. They embark upon a series of improbable commando style raids in the company of Karr, an incongruously youthful leader who at times seems to be the only one who really knows what he's doing. The stories are fast-paced and suspenseful (though the body count is a bit too high for my liking). The kinds of scrapes this mismatched team gets into – and out of – remind me irresistibly of the bumbling adventures of Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* 1960s TV series. (The Russian President in *Deep Black* is coincidentally – or maybe not so – called Kurakin.) At the beginning of *Deep Black*, the reader may feel swamped in a sea of acronyms, as cryptic alphanumeric designations for various weapons and communications systems abound. But it's all explained as the narrative unfolds. Stories like this give you some insight into what's possible right now or in the near future, especially where the capabilities of spy satellites are concerned. (On the other hand, it might make you paranoid!) In one sense *Biowar* is more of the same. But whereas in *Deep Black* the crisis was one that threatened national security and global peace, in *Biowar* the issue is that of bioterrorism.

This makes for an even more tense and riveting tale, as the team works against the clock to unravel the mysteries surrounding a lethal new bio-engineered infection, in a desperate attempt to prevent an outbreak of catastrophic proportions.

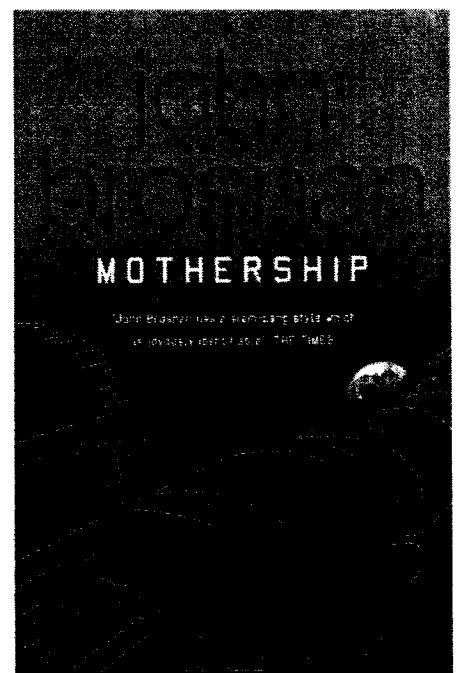
**MOTHERSHIP**

TPB

by John Brosnan

Published by Gollancz

A veteran science fiction fan and author, expatriate Australian John Brosnan has lost none of his enthusiasm for the genre. This story sparkles with his exuberant style. It is told in the first person with wry self-deprecating humour by the protagonist, a failed court jester and minder to an adventure-seeking prince. It starts out as what could be a straightforward medieval fantasy adventure. But the title *MOTHERSHIP* is a dead giveaway (as is the ghostly image of the gargantuan space-faring habitat on the cover), so the reader knows there's more to it than that. It emerges that there are two distinct populations of people aboard the said vessel, which is vast enough to be taken for a complete world if you didn't know any better. The majority of its inhabitants take it at face value that they're living in a medieval society with all the trappings thereof, including a few nifty mythological touches such as dragons. But a sophisticated 'Elite' know better. Arrogant and at times ruthless, they run the ship and keep the rest of the population in line. To the uninformed masses, their superior technology appears to be magic. When it seems that they've lost their powers and given up ruling the roost, nobody misses them. In fact, there is general rejoicing. Life carries on as normal, except that there seem to be a few worrying changes in the climate. When jester Jad and his questing master Prince Ken set out on their grand adventure, little do they know that it will be a voyage of discovery in more ways than one. With the aid of who else but a smart, feisty, butt-kicking chick, their eyes are opened to the realities of their situation (in between fending off attacks by forces human, mechanical and alien). This is both a rousing good adventure yarn and an intriguing science fiction story, told in a highly entertaining way. Full marks to Brosnan on all counts.



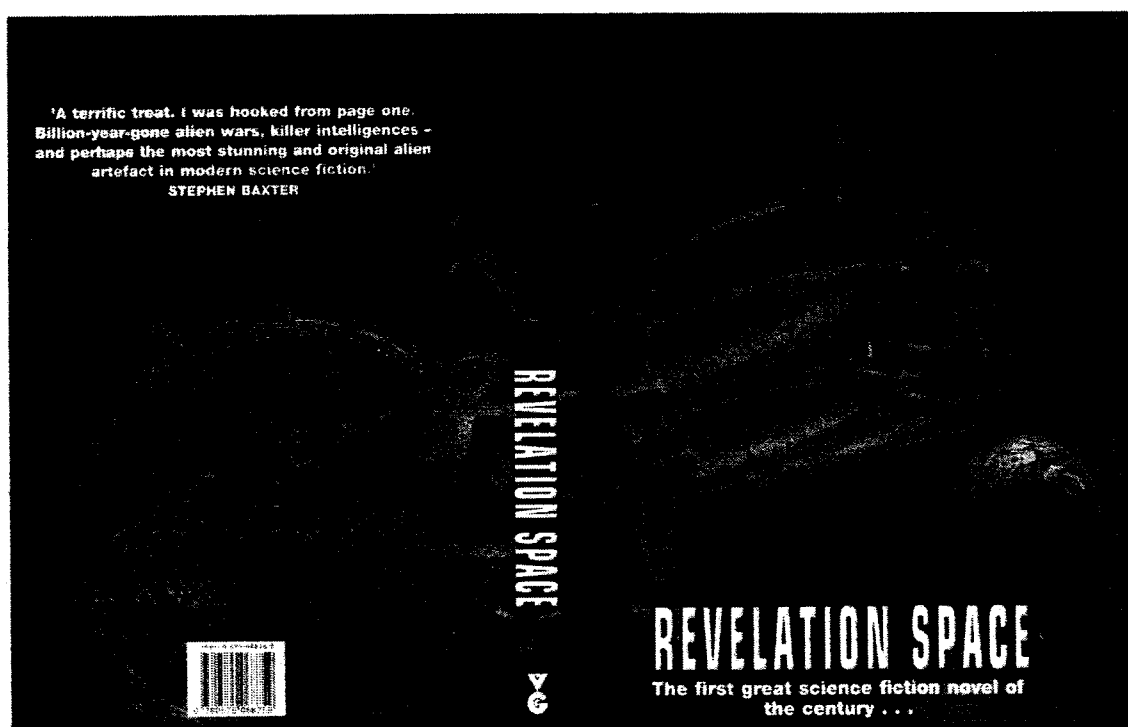
The **INHIBITORS** series: **CHASM CITY**, **REVELATION SPACE**, **REDEMPTION ARK** and **ABSOLUTION GAP** by Alastair Reynolds (Gollancz)

Although we received copies of *Revelation Space* and *Chasm City* for review, I decided that rather than reviewing each one separately, it would be better to wait for the final volume in the 'trilogy' and review them together. Although both books are set in the same 'universe' – and to some extent on the same planet – they feature diverse characters and events. I had high hopes that the third volume would contain 'revelations' that would bring it all together and make more sense of it. When *Absolution Gap* eventually turned up, accompanied by a press release that assured me that this was indeed the promised "third novel in *The Inhibitors* trilogy which began with *Revelation Space* and *Chasm City*", I began reading it with eager anticipation that all of my questions would be answered in due course. I was dismayed to find that I was confronted with more questions than answers. *Absolution Gap* seemed largely to bypass *Chasm City* and carry on from where *Revelation Space* left off, but with puzzling gaps and new characters introduced, with whom the reader was presumed to be familiar. It became increasingly obvious that I had totally missed something of major importance – like another whole book! Sure enough, upon looking up the list of previous titles in the front of the book, there was a title that we hadn't received – *Redemption Ark*. At last all the pieces fell into place, and made sense. Although *Chasm City* fits into it in lateral sort of way, the actual trilogy carrying the main story line is as follows:

REVELATION SPACE  
REDEMPTION ARK  
ABSOLUTION GAP

The observant reader will note that there is a theme going on here – *Revelation*, *Redemption*, *Absolution* – that appears to have been entirely overlooked by the Allen & Unwin (the Australian distributors) publicity department. Does anybody ever actually *read* the stuff before writing these press releases? (Or even have a careful look at the titles?) Fortunately Alan Stewart had a copy of the missing volume and was kind enough to lend it to us, so I was able (eventually) to read the books in their proper order. Anyhow, enough bitching and on to the actual review:

The publisher's blurb on the cover claims this bizarre but brilliant piece of work as "the first great science fiction novel of the century..." meaning the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, which was not very far advanced when *REVELATION SPACE* was released for sale. This was reinforced by Stephen Baxter's enthusiastic endorsement: "A terrific treat. I was hooked from page one. Billion-year-gone alien wars, killer intelligences – and perhaps the most stunning and original alien artefact in modern science fiction." High praise indeed from the master of Really Big Ideas and of science fiction scenarios on a galactic scale! However, he has summed up this epic saga in a nutshell. In some ways *Revelation Space* reminds me of a more sophisticated and technologically advanced version of a kind of classic 1930s space opera. Hinting at an alien menace that threatens all intelligent life in the galaxy, it is set against the background of the personal and political machinations of individuals from ruling dynasties in settings ranging across different worlds, from the phantasmagoric *Chasm City* on Yellowstone and that planet's complex array of orbital habitats, to a mysterious and awesome archaeological site on the frontier world of Resurgam.



Humanity has evolved over the centuries, not by natural forces but by the desire for enhancement and the need to interface with technology, along with the quest for immortality in whatever form, so some of the characters depicted seem almost alien to us. The story is told from the viewpoints of a several major characters, from different points in time (taking into account the relativistic effects of near-light-speed space travel), that all come together in the end. But the real star of *Revelation Space* is a monstrous starship, the lighthugger *Nostalgia for Infinity*, bristling with fearsome weapons of mass destruction, manned by the proverbial motley crew. It is a gripping tale of high adventure and wondrous things, but when I first read it I found it frustratingly incomplete until I learned that there were to be further books set in the same universe.

When we received *CHASM CITY*, I was eager to find out what happened next as a follow-up to *Revelation Space*, but was disconcerted (to say the least) to find that it did not follow the events of *Revelation Space* but was in fact chronologically a kind of prequel to it, even though it was promoted as the second book of the 'trilogy' that turned out to be a 'quadrilogy' (is that a word? There is a need for it, or something like it, with the plethora of multi-volume sagas around these days!) Though set in the same 'universe' and 'local' region (that of the few habitable planets that could be reached from Earth by sub-light-speed space travel), plot-wise *Chasm City* bears little relationship to the overall storyline of the actual trilogy, although it does establish some background detail for matters dealt with in the other novels. It also fills in a little more history of the Sylveste family. Unlike the trilogy, *Chasm City* is a narrative told in the first person by an individual whose true identity remains obscure until the end of the book, though there are about as many hints dropped as in an Agatha Christie novel. The story is a mystery, even a murder-mystery of sorts, that unravels intriguingly with more and more clues revealed as the narrative progresses. But just as the *Nostalgia for Infinity* dominates *Revelation Space*, so the main 'character' of this book really is Chasm City itself. Built on the edge of a great crack in the surface of the largely uninhabitable planet of Yellowstone, the city is sustained by the volcanically heated thermal vents of the Chasm. Its once elegant towers and terraces sprawl under an elaborate structure of interlinking domes now layered with grime, in perpetual gloom. The protagonist (and the reader) is presented at the beginning of the book with an account of the splendour that once was the culture which created Chasm City and the planet's ring of orbital habitats, with the aid of advanced nano-technology. But then the mysterious blight of the "melding plague" struck the city and the satellites, and turned the nano-tech miracle into a nightmare scourge that spared neither machines nor their creators, the humans with sophisticated electronic implants. Life is a struggle for survival in a city whose grotesque remains are a mockery of its former glory. (One of its worst-affected districts is

known as "Escher Heights", which more or less paints the picture for the reader.) Against a seedy backdrop reminiscent of that depicted in *Bladerunner*, the narrator finds himself caught up in the vicious games played out amongst the decadent remnants of the former ruling class, while all the time pursuing his personal quest. The "melding plague" has a direct bearing on one of the main story devices in *Revelation Space*, and the "indoctrination virus" pops up again in *Absolution Gap*, so it is probably helpful to have read *Chasm City*. In my opinion it's better to have read it first, as once you get into the continuing saga that carries over from *Revelation Space* directly into *Redemption Ark* and finally *Absolution Gap*, it is distracting to have to interrupt the flow of the story to read *Chasm City*, which has no continuity with the main plot.

*REDEMPTION ARK* introduces some new characters and we see more of the ongoing conflicts between various factions (and types) of humans. In addition to the standard model (people pretty much as they are today), there are the Conjoiners – passionate believers in the superiority of the group mind, who achieve their communal state of unity and superhuman intellectual facility not through ESP but with the help of high technology. The Demarchists oppose the Conjoiners both politically and militarily, the bitter conflict a drain on the resources of a culture already diminished by the scourge of the melding plague. The Ultras are almost like a species apart, many of them physically obvious cyborgs. Using esoteric techniques to fend off illness and the ageing process, they tend to remain aloof from the conflicts of other factions. Their long lifespans suit them ideally to the task of manning the "lighthugger" starships that push the limits of relativistic travel, hauling cargo and sleeping passengers between the scattered worlds of human settlement. Hanging over all these groups is a threat that overshadows all of their interests and threatens all their worlds. Its presence hitherto hinted at by the extinction of all the ancient alien civilizations whose remaining traces humans have come across, the "Inhibitors" sole reason for existence appears to be to obliterate any emerging technologically sophisticated species. They just haven't gotten around to humans. Yet. But they're getting to it. This is the big theme of the series. Will humanity survive this menace or won't it? This comes to a culmination in *ABSOLUTION GAP*, in which people seem to be seeking answers in all the wrong places, and finding even more troubling questions. It's gripping stuff. The saga deals with wonders of the universe, both natural and artificially created, that beggar description and boggle the mind. It is a tale of great complexity, reflecting both the richness of the author's imagination and the depth of his understanding of the universe according to the latest wisdom. Reynolds' solid professional grounding in astronomy and physics gives his work considerable authority and enables him to create believable scenarios that are actually way out on the edge of scientific speculation (as a good science fiction writer should!)  
**HELENA BINNS**

## SF&FANTASY MOVIES SEEN

A few SF, fantasy and comic associated movies have been turning up during this year. It is unlikely that we will see any more *Star Trek* ones after the last disaster but I expect the new *Star Wars* movie may turn up later in the year also. Meanwhile I saw a few others of interest at least, as follows :

**BIG FISH** starred Albert Finney as the older yarn-spinning family man and Ewan McGregor as his younger self. I enjoyed it as a bit of light "homespun" fantasy but Helena found it only mildly entertaining and overall a bit irritating. At least we did see it on a one-in-three deal for free.



Producers PETER JACKSON and BARRIE OSBOURNE with their Oscars for Best Director and Best Picture for TLoTR THE RETURN OF THE KING

I am rarely pleased with the total outcome of the ACADEMY AWARDS and as usual I would rather have seen other people win the best acting awards. However we were both ecstatic with *The Lord of the Rings – THE RETURN OF THE KING* winning every category it was nominated for, including best picture. A pity at least some acting performance in it did not receive an award, though. We got to see **WHALE RIDER**



at the government sponsored Australian Centre for the Moving Image, a high-falooting name for the organisation which took over the functions of the old State Film Centre. A wonderful little film with elements of fantasy but giving an interesting insight into New Zealand's Maori culture. Beautifully filmed, taking advantage of the natural beauty of the area where it was shot, as did *Lord of the Rings*. The young actress playing the lead role, Keisha Castle-Hughes, deserved her nomination for an Academy Award. Talking about SF movies there have certainly been some disasters and the one I dislike very much is *Gattica*, for reasons I will not go into again here. *Minority Report* was great and I see that Tom Cruise is making another SF movie, this time with Stephen

Spielberg. Meanwhile we went to see **THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT**, despite reviews of which that were not favorable. We were reminded of Le Guin's *Lathe of Heaven*, but things were not happening on such a grand scale. We found the movie entertaining if not spectacular. **HIDALGO**, starring Vigo Mortensen after his stint in *Lord of the Rings* as Aragorn, was quite entertaining. It was loosely based on a character who performed in Wild Bill Hickock's *Wild West* shows in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and featured him competing in a horse race in Arabia. It was great to see Omar Sharif as the Arab chieftain and reminded us of his role in *Lawrence of Arabia*. This differently placed Western was nicely filmed and had some spectacular scenery, even if it was not actually filmed where the story was set. It will appeal to horse lovers, with the hero's pinto pony a real scene stealer, along with his efforts to horses used by the American Indians. The mistreatment of the Indians, in particular at Wounded Knee, as depicted in *Last Samurai* and *Dances With Wolves*, was a significant part of the plot. Yet another movie based on a Philip K. Dick Story was **PAY CHECK**, which was on my list to see, but went off before we could get to see it. I did see **THE HAUNTED MANSION**, the Disney production which was obviously aimed at kids, but had some quite adult angles to it. Then, what could you expect from Eddie Murphy, but Terence Stamp as the butler ghost was great and certainly did look like death warmed up. The witch in the glass ball was also great, but the mansion itself was the real star of the show. It almost deserved an Oscar for set design. Over all a bit silly and it obviously pinched ideas from various other movies featuring ghosts in haunted houses. We also saw **THE HAUNTED CASTLE** at the IMAX theatre and even without the 3D effects the scenes of enormous rooms, demons and a descent in hell, would have been mind-blowing. It featured a young rock musician of average talent, who is offered a deal by the Devil, which his



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late mother, who owned the castle had taken up. Even the bit of rock music did not worry us too much because our senses were being assaulted visually at any rate.



In June I got to see the movie **VAN HELSING** starring Australian actor Hugh Jackman, who is currently wowing them on Broadway, New York in his role as Peter Allen in *The Boy From Oz*. He not only compered for the Annual theatre Awards on Broadway, at the Radio City Music Hall, but was presented with a *Tony* award himself for his role as Peter Allen in the aforementioned

musical. Incidentally the interior of Radio City Music Hall is like huge amphitheatre, which I visited in 1973 on my way back from TORCON II, and seemed to me to be like an ideal hangar for a dirigible. Jackman as you may remember also starred in the comic orientated movie *X MEN*. Two other Australian actors co-starred in this spectacular horror movie, with David Wenham ( Faramir in *The Lord of the Rings*) in a very different role for him as a eccentric weapons expert, ala Q in the *James Bond* movies. Richard Roxborough played a very different type of count to his one in *Moulin Rouge*, as the infamous Dracula, hamming it up wonderfully. All comic strip stuff with spectacular special effects and altogether a very enjoyable load of codswallop. **SECRET WINDOW**, starring Johnny Depp as an eccentric, psycho writer, was as delightfully demented as ever, but the plot, from a short story by Stephen King, was to put it politely, unappealing. I did not like the way it developed although there were clues on the way through to what was really going on. The ending of a story that Depp's character had written was in dispute, which was translated into the ending of the movie. Of course the ending was the crucial part of the movie, but I hated it and I did not think that it was necessary to end it that way. But I suppose that is typical of a horror writer like Stephen King. I must admit I have only read maybe one King book, which was more or less SF, but I have seen a few of the movies made from his writing which I have appreciated to some degree, but not this one.

**THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW** is a rather scary view of what can happen if the trend of global

warming of our planet continues. A disaster movie to top them all, but an indication that the human race can survive whatever, oh yeah! The hero does save his son trapped in an iced-in New York, sheltering and surviving by burning the books in the Public Library. Like many other movies now the sfx are the star of the show. The science, as my learned retired meteorologist friend Dr Ditmar Jenssen points out, leaves a lot to be desired but never the less this movie is making people aware of the fact that global warming is with us.

We saw the second **SPIDER MAN** movie on the 13<sup>th</sup> and I enjoyed it with reservations. I find it difficult to I guess "suspend my disbelief" in relation to some comic book super heroes and although I wanted to enjoy the *Spiderman* movie, watching him fly enormous distances in the caverns of New York buildings, swinging on his web, was hard to take. However it was a good story and pointing out once again that some superheroes are only human after all, with as to be expected some outstanding special effects. It was left wide open at the end for another movie.

We finally got to see **PAYCHECK** which we missed on its short run in the theatres, when friend Dick Jenssen screened his DVD copy of it for us. I cannot understand why it was not more popular and was largely canned by the critics. It is basically "Philip K. Dick gone James Bond", with lots of thrills, chases, a villainous adversary for the hero, fabulous sets, scientific gimmickry, some of the best looking futuristic architecture I have seen and more. I loved it and I would rate it at least 8 out of 10. Ben Affleck was okay in the lead role, with Uma Thurman as the female lead being I guess adequate, but for some reason I am not greatly impressed with her. P. K. Dick had some great ideas, but in general I did not like reading his SF. However the adaptations seen of his tales into movies has I think been well done and most likely come out better than the originals.



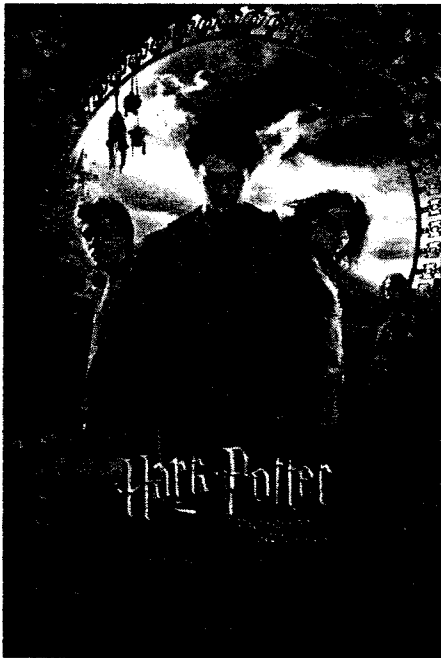
Helena does not like watching animated movies as much as I do, and I must say I feel sorry that she has not enjoyed all

the early Disney movies and cartoons that I loved, but she did watch the first *Shrek* movie on TV. She liked it, so we both went to see **SHREK 2**. Needless to say the animation is great and the story is just as funny as the first one. What a twisted fairy tale it is but it all ends "happily ever after", though not quite as most fairy tales you might expect to end. The characters are just as great as in the first movie, particularly the new guy on the block Puss In Boots, with Antonio Banderas (Zorro) doing the voice over.

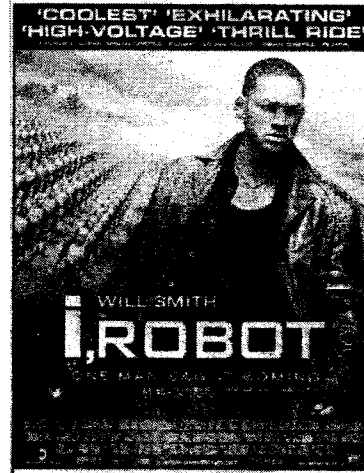


The King, Fiona's father, not the objectionable weed in the first film, was good with John Cleese doing his voice, while Julie Andrews voiced her mother the Queen. The nasty fairy godmother was also well done with Jennifer Saunders from TV's *Absolutely Fabulous* doing the voice over. All in all an enjoyable romp.

**HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN**, the movie based on the third book in the *Harry Potter* series, will be followed I believe by two more books and movies. It is a good tale with plenty of humour and adventure, with great sfx thrown in. The sets and all round visual aspects of the movie were great, as to be expected, but the story did not grab me any more than the earlier movies. It was just great to see more of the same plus new similar gimmicks with similar impact and I am looking forward to seeing more. I was particularly impressed with the animated effects such as the talking paintings again and the nasty tree. The scenery including the country side and specially the buildings housing Hogwarts College with pointed turrets, the fly-overs and all, which did seem a bit more spectacular than in the previous two movies.



There are so many movies in general coming out now that I am interested in seeing, I could go to the theatre two or three times a week, but finances limit it to two or three a month, if I am lucky. There is lots of recent stuff on the cable TV but there again the cost is also prohibitive. Well, we both went to see *I, ROBOT*, starring Will Smith, with some trepidation, both having always been devoted Asimov readers. Like *The Lord of the Rings* but even more so, it deviates from the original story being more of a spin-off than anything to do with the original story. But I think that we both looked at it for itself and relatively enjoyed it. I was not sold on the form the robots took but otherwise I thought the special effects were okay and although they danced around the Three Laws of Robotics the plot was fair enough.



It was disappointing though that Harlan Ellison's screenplay based much more closely to Asimov's original story, published in book form in 1994, never made it to the screen, but it was considered to difficult to make at the time. These days we know that

they can do almost anything, so why did we have to have this unsatisfactory adaptation which barely adheres to Asimov's ideas?

Having seen the trailer for Vin Diesel's *CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK* I felt that I had to see it, even if it was a lot of garbage and I must admit it was. The plot was crap and the only saving grace, if you could call it that, was some of the sets and scenery. The costumes were stupid, the whole concept was dumb and for the life of me I do not know what encouraged Dame Judi Dench to appear in it as a life form called an "elemental". It might be classed as a science-fantasy with more of the fantasy being prominent but over all a fine example of movie makers not having a bloody clue about what makes sense, a coherent plot or what the hell they were doing.

*HELLBOY*, starring Ron Perlman, John Hurt and others, is based on a comic and if you appreciate all the mumbo-jumbo in most comics you will love this one. It is the biggest load of rubbish you will ever see, but particularly well done, with great special effects, a crazy but mostly coherent story and a good bit of humour. The big ugly star Perlman - TV's lion-man in *Beauty and the Beast* and various other appropriate roles such as *Quest for Fire* and *The Name of the Rose* - is really great and obviously enjoys hamming it up. Okay, it is more than crazy with lots of horrible monsters, a reincarnated Rasputin and more, but all the kids, large and small, will love it.

Another bit of sort of SF rubbish we watched on the box was Jet Li's *THE ONE*, which allowed him to demonstrate his martial arts abilities. He plays a double role of a guy knocking off all his counterparts in various other dimensions and so absorbing their strength. That is until he meets his counterpart in our dimension who is his match, of course.

That's it for this issue folks, and I hope it is not so long before you see another issue.

**MERV BINNS**