

# The Birmingham Science Fiction Group

Number 140

APRIL 1983

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

APRIL MEETING. Friday April 15 at 7:45 pm.

This month our guest speaker is TOBY ROXBURGH. Toby is the editor of Futura books. He has guaranteed that his talk on the publishing of science fiction will "drive Pete Weston up the wall." Which is a pity as Pete will not be there! The meeting will be chaired by Rog Peyton and will be followed, once again, with a Chinese meal at the neighbouring Lychee Garden restaurant.

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

## COMING ATTRACTIONS.

MAY.— 'Question Time' with Lawrence "Robin Day" Miller and his team (Margaret Thorpe, Simon Norburn, Bob Vernon and Stan Eling.) They will answer awkward SF-type questions from the audience, so start thinking up some now!

JUNE — We hope to have BRIAN ALDISS this month.

We would like to have an extra social meeting this summer — perhaps a barbecue. If anyone knows of a suitable large, open area, please let the committee know.

## other business

The BSFG will shortly be launching an ambitious new project, — known as APA-B. In which members will be able to circulate their own small fanzines and receive those of others. It was originally planned to produce the first 'mailing' in time for the April meeting, but will now be postponed to May. For further information contact Kevin Easthope at 113 Abbey Road, Erdington, Birmingham 23.

## THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR STRIKES BACK!

Thanks to a special purchase on behalf of the BSFG, a limited number of copies of this ageless fannish 'classic' are now available. This is the 1979 edition, published by Seacon '79 as one of the Worldcon Fan-Room Publications, and is available at cost, £2.00 per copy (all proceeds to TAFP). Requests to Peter Weston at 72 Beeches Drive,



Erdington, Birmingham B24 ODT. Copies are already reserved for Steve Green, Phill Probert, Dean Bisseker, Paul Vincent and Kevin Easthope. Collect them next time you see me.

(Peter Weston.)

#### BOPPING WITH THE BRUMMIES!

Members will be pleased to know that the Brum Group party at ALBACON II went with a swing. The Group contributed a large amount of beer and organised a lively disco in the Fan Room on the Sunday night until 4:30 am. Many fans afterwards commented it was the best fan-party they'd ever been to at a convention. Many thanks to Steve Green, Kevin Clarke and Rog Peyton for their time and effort.

THE LORD MAYOR'S PROCESSION is only six weeks away. The theme is "Living Through The Ages" Dean Bisseker (publicity officer) is in charge of this and if anyone knows of facilities for making the float, and a lorry, please let him know. Dean also needs volunteers and will be organising a planning meeting soon.

# News~

A.E. VAN VOGT has won the 1983 Jules Verne Award for lifetime contributions to science fiction.

Revenge of the Jedi is now to be titled Return of the Jedi since Jedi knights are not supposed to use their powers for revenge!

ROY G. KRENEL died of cancer on February 24. Roy was best known for his Edgar Rice Burroughs covers in the 1960's. In 1963 he won the Hugo Award for best professional artist. A memorial volume of his work is planned.

Surprise, surprise! Last Dangerous Visions Vol. I will/may be released this autumn.

IAN WATSON has a comic-novel due to be published in 1984, probably called Converts. Meanwhile, his novel Changes will be out in July this year.

#### New SF magazines in the pipeline:

A 'technology fiction' magazine is planned, called Reality. It was masterminded by Maurice Goldsmith of Science Policy Foundation, Charles Barren — SF Foundation's acting administrator, George Hay, and possibly the one-and-only Dave Langford.

Also possibly out now is Sebastion; a semi-pro A4 magazine by Patrice Bernard. It contains mostly art/comix.

The Solihull SF Group has gone back to meeting on the second Sunday of the month. Later in April a mass expedition will be going to see DARK CRYSTAL.

The stage version of THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE will be performed at the Belgrade, Coventry from June 23 to July 9.

#### NEW MEMBERS:

- 369. TREVOR BURR 34 Coplow Street, Ladywood, Birmingham. B16 ODL.
- 423. JOHN WILKES 18A Ivel Gardens, Biggleswade, Beds. SG18 OAN.
- 424. LYNN EDWARDS 71 Gleneagles Road, Yardly, Birmingham. B26 2HT.



# Fanzines

ABDUMP -- a personalzine by Paul Vincent. Available from Paul at 25 Dovedale Avenue, Pelsall, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 4HG.

TWILIGHT ZINE -- Solihull SF Group fanzine, edited by Steve Green, 11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27 7SD.

CALABAN -- a genzine containing fiction, poetry, artwork etc. Issue 2 out soon, some copies of issue 1 are still available from Eunice Pearson Apt. 2, 1 Broughton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B20 2PT. BRIGANTE also available soon.

If you have a fanzine you would like to see here, please tell me the details.

## Reviews:

Only two reviews this month, normal service should be more or less resumed next issue. I think it would help if I made my policy on book reviews clear from the beginning. Each issue will contain only a selection of each month's new issue. The rest will be listed. This should leave room for reviewers to go into more depth in the books they deal with.

REBEL IN TIME by Harry Harrison, Granada £7.95, 271 pp.

Dear Harry, how clever, how courageous, how risky! To take this simple tale of Mad McCulloch, the red-necked Colonel, time-zipping to the American Civil War to zap the Yanks with Sten guns, hotly pursued by black U.S. Vietnam Vetran Sgt. Troy, and style you novel after its central artefact. What confidence it took to turn out a production line, cheap, disposable, crudely constructed, coarsely welded, clumsy devise! A veritable 'Sten' of a book. Of course we know you are, in truth, a highly skilled workman, capable of producing elegant, accurate, witty weapons, finely balanced, carefully calibrated, hand-crafted works (Bill The Galactic Hero, Make Room Make Room, Captive Universe etc.) so this must be a structural breakthrough. But was it wise to choose the Sten gun? Of course Sgt. Troy junks them all in the end and goes back to fighting with the good ole traditional weapons. Tell us you'll do the same Harry, after all, read one Sten gun and you've read them all.

Reviewed by Bob Vernon.

THE PROUD ROBOT by Henry Kuttner, Hamlyn £1.50, 189 pp.

Kuttner was one of the best humorist science fiction writers, and these short stories about Galloway Gallagher are long overdue for general appreciation. Gallagher can only meet the deadline on his invention contracts when completely drunk; unfortunately, he can never predict how his subconscious has interpreted the problem, and this sets the scene for some classic denouements in the stories. Just to select two of the five brilliant pieces in the book; "The World Is Mine" has the crazy non-sequiter logic of the Hogben stories, with rabbit-like Martians hoping to conquer the Earth, and in passing, giving the secret of a Heat Ray machine to Gallagher. "The Proud Robot" is an example of humorous sf at its very best -- the storyline is neat and fastmoving, while the punchline is brilliantly revealed. Excellent value for money.

Reviewed by Margaret Thorpe.



# chairman's report

MY GOODNESS, that was a busy month!

"I thought you said it would only take one evening per month." said Eileen, somewhere between the EGM and our projects meeting.

"Ah yes," I replied wisely, "but there's been a lot to do."

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I was in two minds whether or not to say anything more on the NOVACON affair; I mean, I don't want to re-open old wounds. Particularly since the whole thing was possibly based on misunderstandings on both sides.

Still, if it was worth arguing about until 11:30 pm, then I ought to at least review what was achieved — and there is one important point I need to make.

At the EGM we were all reminded that the annual November convention has been run by the BSFG since 1971, and we then voted strongly in favour of maintaining this arrangement. With no disrespect to the present, NOVACON-13 committee, who seem to be an exceptionally dynamic lot, we re-affirmed our intention to continue running the convention as a Brum Group project during the years to come.

However, here's the rub — do we actually mean it? Do we, as a Group, actually have the interest, the savvy, the commitment to run NOVACON in 1984, 1985, and so on? Or will we have a repeat of the situation a few years back, when so few members evidently expressed interest that special arrangements had to be made for people outside Birmingham to take on the task of running our convention for us?

As I see it, we, as a Group with nearly 100 paid-up members, should have no difficulty in fielding a new committee every year. If we can't, if we really don't have six or seven people with enough enthusiasm to take it on, then maybe we should seriously consider terminating the NOVACON series.

Don't you agree?

There's something else too. At the Eastercon last weekend (ALBACON II) at least a half-dozen came over to me and asked about NOVACON — not about the constitutional hassles, but more in the vein of "Can't you brighten the thing up a bit?" Personally, I enjoyed the 1982 NOVACON more than most, but there's no doubt that many other attendees feel the convention has gone a bit stale. Maybe it's the hotel — I must confess to being bored with the Royal Angus, excellent though it is in most practical respects.

Whatever the cause, the BSFG clearly needs to be sure we put in some individuality each year, rather than running the convention by rote. After all, we're no longer in a seller's market; as one of those disgruntled fans reminded me, there's been an excellent Welsh convention just before NOVACON for the past two years. If we don't watch out, that could take our traditional place as the 'other' large British convention (not to mention the Scots with their own regular Autumn bashes).

So, despite our little differences last month, I'm genuinely pleased to see how much effort the NOVACON-13 committee is putting into new ideas, new programming. This year should be a good one; now, seriously fans, is the time to start thinking about 1984. Er..... could I have the names of anyone in the Group who might be interested in forming a committee? No promises, no obligations at this stage — let's just say I'm curious to see who wants to stand up and be counted!

- PETER WESTON.



# Albacon II.

As previously arranged, several group members met in the Buffet at New Street station at the fairly unearthly hour of 7.45 am on April first, intending, as Steve Green put it, "to invade Scotland by train". We managed to get seats together, and ran a sort of informal meeting/party on the way up. Beer was drunk, cartoons were drawn — poking fun at nearly everyone present, plus a few too timid to risk travelling 'abroad' — Peter Weton's 'Shield of Humour' for the fancy dress was eventually consigned to the Guard's van after the twentieth person had fallen over it on the way to the Buffet Car. (This led to comments like: 'Pete, did you know your shield's on it's way to Edinburgh?', after the train was divided at Carstairs. He did not believe these remarks, and the shield did remain with us.)

When we arrived in Glasgow, (about 1 pm) and registered at the con, most people vanished in search of hotel rooms, some of us being in the overflow hotel about six hundred yards away, then it was a case of get a drink and wander around the hotel until the first interesting programme item came up. For me this was a talk by Dave Langford entitled "First Novel Blues", a revised and expanded version of the talk he gave to the group last year with extra jokes and asides added, and was extremely good. After that I dropped in on an item called "Hot Gossip", which was a talk by/discussion with Avedon Carol, this year's TAFF winner, consisting of exploits of American fans, and what the British TAFF delegates had got up to in previous years. Several of our group seemed to be suffering from headaches as the day wore on, (Train-lag?) and went to bed early. thus unfortunately (?) missing the Vagon poetry competition, apparently this was suitably dreadful, and Martin Hoare's Beer Tasting event.

Saturday dawned bright and early, with the film 'A Man Called Flintstone', another TAFF spot with Avedon Carol, and the Great Pork Pie Race — the object being to move a British Standard Pork Pie fourty feet by any means available to the imagination. This was great fun, but I don't think the standard was as good as last year. Following this there was the Guest of Honour speech by James White, notable for its dreadful puns, and featuring some well known members of Scottish Fandom as aliens in a spoof 'Sector General' plot. After a break came the Fancy Dress, featuring Peter Weston as Jophan, lots of wierdly dressed people, and a pun contest. I felt the latter, in particular the Cambridge University entry, should have carried a Government Health Warning, and judging by the reaction of the audience I was not alone!

Sunday held the 1984 Eastercon bidding session, which lasted quite a while, and for those people who knew that there were two rival bids, I can reveal that next year's Eastercon will be held in Brighton. After the bidding session came the "Serious Scientific Talk" by Bob Shaw, this year on the art of Fanmanship, and well up to it's usual (excellent) standard. I managed to avoid the art auction, and accidentally missed the speech by Marion Zimmer Bradley, (American Guest of Honour) which I'm told was quite good. The BSFG room party was held later that night, Steve Green had been delegated the job of buying the beer, and did this very well, large quantities of Real Beer being in evidence. Biased reporting (me) says the party was a great success, while unbiased opinions, (Martin Hoare, Chris Donaldson and others) rated it 'excellent'! I think Ian Sorenson had a lot to do with the success of the party, he had run a sort of musical interlude just before our party, with a group of people miming to various 'got-at' songs poking fun at various well-known fans and fan groups. (e.g. Village People's 'Y.M.C.A.' altered to poke fun at the BSFA, etc.) This had everyone in a party mood before we started, and it carried on from there until the party closed at some unearthly hour of the morning.



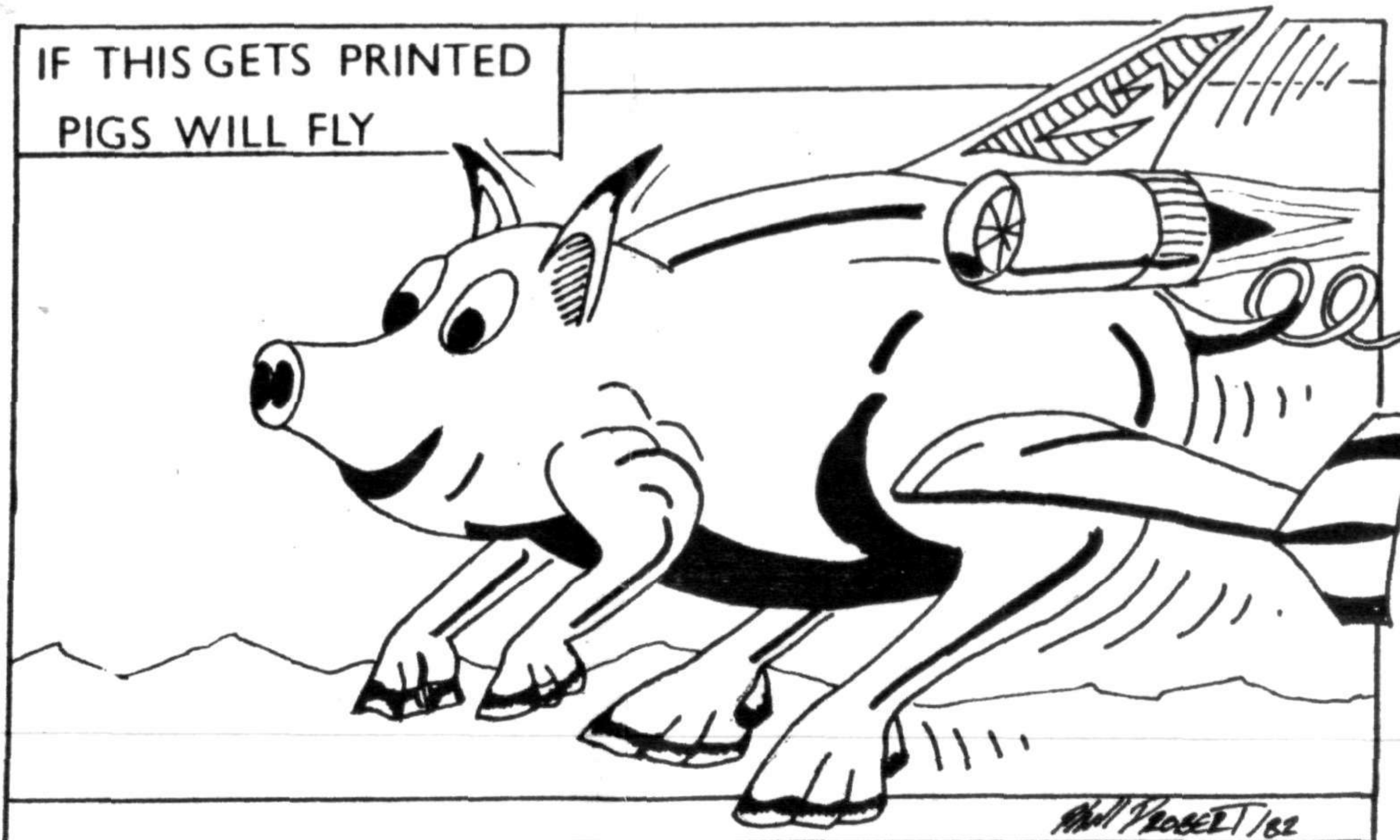
Monday was time for me to go home, I didn't take notes, so if you want to know what the rest of the con was like I suggest you ask Martin Tudor, who stayed till the very end, and will no doubt hate me forever for suggesting this! Opinion has it that this was the best Eastercon for a long time, and it set new records in a number of ways. It appears that we drank more beer in a weekend than the hotel had sold in the last one hundred years! We also chewed our way through 4,200 hamburgers weighing about half a ton, and the hotel staff were very friendly, (i.e. looking for a room party at 4 am to join in!). This will take some beating. All in all, a very enjoyable convention, and I'm looking forward to the next one.

CHRIS SUSLOWICZ.

## The Top Ten Bestsellers

1. The Non-Born King by Julian May. (Pan)
2. Friday by Robert Heinlein. (New English Library.)
3. The Many Coloured Land by Julian May. (Pan)
4. Proud Robot by Henry Kuttner. (Hamlyn)
5. The Stainless Steel Rat For President by Harry Harrison. (Sphere)
6. The Affirmation by Chris Priest. (Arena)
7. Lensman From Rigel by David Kyle. (Corgi)
8. Anti-Pope by Robert Rankin. (Pan)
9. Unaccompanied Sonata by Orson Scott Card. (Futura)
10. Run To The Stars by Mike Scott Rohan. (Arrow)

(From Andromeda Bookshop.)





# 7 Last Month

I intend to break with the tradition of just saying how great last month's meeting was, by offering my views on where it possibly went wrong, as well as where it went right. On the whole, last month's meeting must be considered a success as all the people I spoke to said that they had enjoyed it. The meeting was not without it's problems however. Basically, we tried to do too much and were bound to fall short.

The meeting started off with Rog Peyton and Pete Weston discussing their different views of the evolution of SF. Pete regarding magazines to have had the greater influence and Rog believing books to have been more important. It soon became apparent that we could not possibly get both views in the time available, so the talk became quite sensibly dominated by Pete, who went on to show us some interesting slides. "You will get the real version later" said Rog. Hopefully we will get Rog to give us his view of things at a future meeting.

The meeting was originally devised to get a group discussion going. With one or two exceptions this did not really occur. This was due more to the format of the meeting being unsuitable than people being willing to speak, and we shall have to look for a more suitable format for a group discussion. Any suggestions?

DEAN BISSEKER.



Well, what did you think of Pete's statement? If you write and tell me, we could have quite a good letter column next month. Hopefully we should have a fanzine review section too.

Thank you everyone who contributed and to Locus and Ansible for the news. This issue was edited by Eunice Pearson, Apt. 2, 1 Broughton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B20 2PT.

NEXT ISSUE'S COPY DEADLINE = MONDAY 9th MAY



