


THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

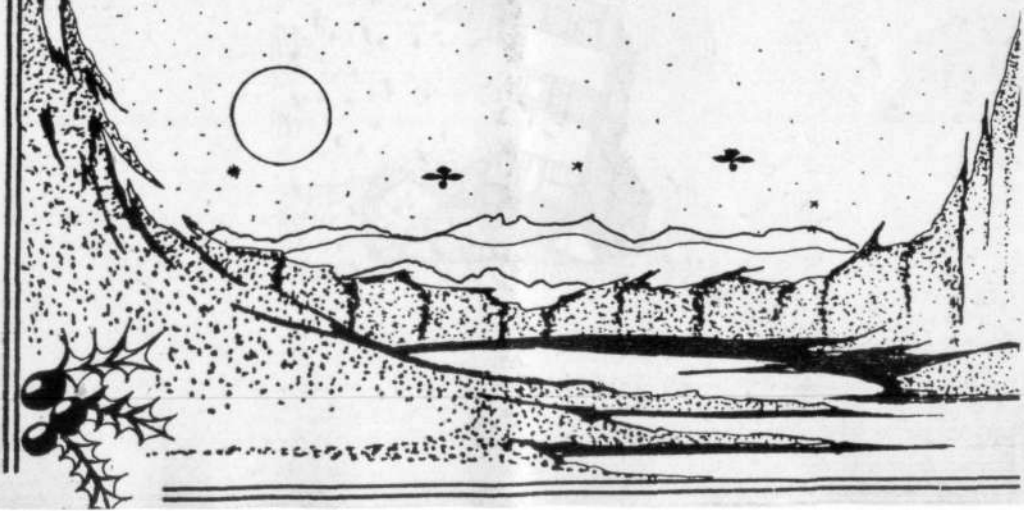
(Honorary Presidents: Brian W. Aldiss
and Harry Harrison)

Number 148

DECEMBER 1983



Merry Christmas
Everyone !!



The Birmingham Science Fiction Group has its formal meeting on the third Friday of each month in the Imperial Hotel, Temple street, Birmingham city centre. There is also an informal meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at the General Wolfe pub, on the corner of Aston road and Holt street. 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.

THERE IS NO ORDINARY MEETING THIS MONTH, INSTEAD THERE WILL BE A CHRISTMAS PARTY.....An epic celebration of the festivities, with Special Guests Bob and Sadie Shaw and a host of surprises. Tickets only -- and regrettably, they are all sold. However, contact Margaret Thorpe if you are interested; she may have a last-minute cancellation. (And non-diners can join us afterwards in the upstairs bar.)

20 January 1984: Annual General Meeting

Presentation of Reports and election of officers. Also we will hold our traditional Auction -- please bring along donations of books, magazines, etc.

Please note that we usually meet in the Stafford Room of the Imperial Hotel now. We do have the managements's blessing to use the private, upstairs bar, but normally we have not arranged for bar service (for which we would have to pay). Drinks can be obtained from the downstairs bar and carried up -- it seems to work well enough!



News~

Peter Yates' Pinewood-made, modern-day fairy tale adventure, KRULL is opening soon in Birmingham after christmas. It stars Ken Marshall, Lysette Anthony (of "Domby And Son"), Freddie Jones and Francesca Annis.

Stephen King's novel Christine has been made into a film by Columbia Pictures and will be released sometime in March. The film is directed by John Carpenter.

Robert Aldrich recently died at the age of 65. He starred in the sf film Twilight's Last Gleaming with Burt Lancaster, as a general holding America to ransom.

Forest J Ackerman is reported to have a "spotlighted cameo role" in a short fantasy film called Thriller, directed by John Landis. Mr Landis directed Michael Jackson's video Thriller, so, which ghoulie was Mr Ackerman?

Paul Kanter, of the rock group "Jefferson Starship", has written an sf novel featuring a rock group who develop telpathic powers. "Jefferson Starship" have also just recorded a soundtrack album to co-incide with the novel.

THE 1983 WORLD FANTASY AWARDS:

Life Achievement: ROALD DAHL.

Best novel: Niffy The Lean by MICHAEL SHEA.

Best Novella (tie): "Beyond All Measure" by KARL EDWARD WAGNER.
"Confess The Seasons" by CHARLES L GRANT.

Best Short Fiction: "The Gorgon" by TANITH LEE.

Best Anthology/Collection: Nightmare Seasons ed. CHARLES L GRANT.

Best Artist: MICHAEL WHELAN.

Special Award (Professional): DONALD M GRANT (publisher).

Special Award (Non-professional): STUART D SCHIFF (Whispers Press).

Trevor d'Cruze, boss of NEL books, has bought the British rights to L Ron Hubbard's Battlefield Earth and has set-up a new imprint, Quadrant Publishing. Both hardcover and paperback versions of the novel are to be printed next year.

A new Arthur C Clarke book is to be published next year by Granada called 1984:Spring. It is a collection of Mr Clarke's previously unpublished "pieces".

THE 1983 BRITISH FANTASY AWARDS.

Best Novel: The Sword Of The Lictor by GENE WOLFE.

Best Short Story: "The Breathing Method" by STEPHEN KING.

Small Press Award: Fantasy Tales ed by STEPHEN JONES and DAVID SUTTON

Best Film: BLADE RUNNER.

Best Artist: DAVE CARSON.

Special Award: KARL EDWARD WAGNER.

THE 1983 EUROCON AWARDS:

Best writer: CHRIS PRIEST and ISTVAN NEMERE (Hungary).
Best prozine: Fantastyka (Poland) and Solaris (West Germany).
Best Fanzine: Kvazar (Poland) and Shards of Babel (Netherlands).
Best works: Ljude, Zvezde, Svetori, Vesolja (People, Stars, Worlds, Space) by DRAGO BAJT (Slovenian).

Joe Nicholas and Judith Hanna were married on the 19th of November. Congratulations to them from the Brum Group.

Steve Green and Ann Thomas will be married on December 17 and Phill Probert and Eunice Pearson will be married on December 21. Is there no end to this madness??!



chairman's report

My goodness, is that the time? Only fifteen shopping days to Christmas (as I write), or only about nine (as you read this) ----- where did the time go??

Fuelled by an injection of Tetley's Best Bitter at the BSFG informal meeting last night, I'm tempted to wax philisophical and to muse about the way in which things have developed this year. Graham Poole remarked, "Since I only joined the Group in 1983, I can't imagine things ever being any different" -- but we know, don't we, how very much has changed.

I mean, last night there were ten people sitting in the bar of the General Wolfe, just about every one of whom could be said to be committed fans. Steve Green holding an impromptu Novacon 14 meeting in one corner (there are only eleven months to go, and he's worried that he's left things to the last minute); Cath Easthope distributing a huge pile of fanzines from one of other of the half-dozen apas which she and Eunice have joined; Martin Tudor and Paul Vincent discussing the various Worldcons, Eurocons and other projects in which they're involved, and so on.

What does all this have to do with Science Fiction, one may ask, pronouncing those capital letters to emphasise the divine nature of our favourite reading matter?? Does this "fandom" really have any significance, or is it just a frivolous distraction?

I'm afraid my own attitude is very clear; for a long while, the Birmingham Group has needed to be more in tune with nationwide (and worldwide) SF fandom generally; we've needed the stimulus and feedback from a wider circle than just our own little group, and we've needed to pay some attention to our 'image' -- for it's quite true that a lot of people regarded us as a fairly moribund backwater, not doing anything in particular apart from our 'formal' meetings programme.

The new situation pleases me enormously, because we've actually added a whole new spectrum, or should I perhaps say quantum level, of involvement. For the first time since its inception in 1971, the BSFG actually has a 'fannish' heart, an inner core to which members can penetrate, if they have the wish. This doesn't affect, or detract from the normal meetings; quite the opposite, it ensures there will be a pool of committed ~~xxx~~ idealists, ready and willing to do their bit in time of need.

Which, by way of the above lead-in, brings me round to the subject of the Group Committee for 1984, and the Annual General Meeting, the shadow of which is now starting to loom over us.

It's not easy being on the committee; at least, it isn't if one approaches the job with a spirit of dedication, willing

to preform all sorts of chores, spend many hours of time, for the intangible objective of 'support your local group'. Many are the detractors -- whatever you do! That much is always constant; you can't please everyone, as, for example, Phill Probert found with Novacon 13 this year. Phill recounted how, within a short space of time, he was assaulted with complaints from two different individuals, both 100% right in their opinions, that there was both a lack of programming and a surfeit of programme. "How can I win?" he asked. The answer is, for any committeeperson, that you can't.

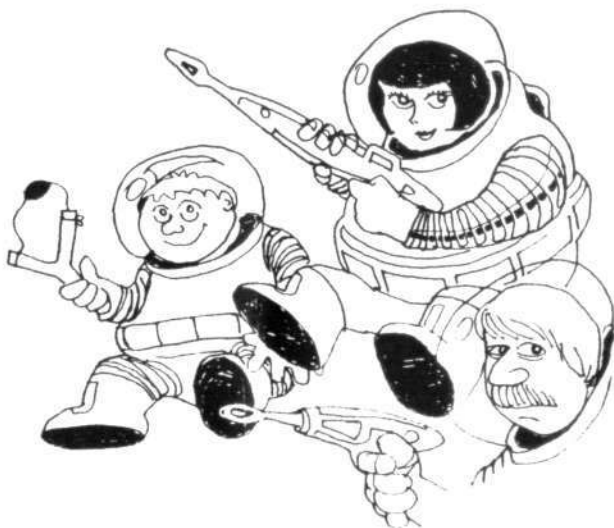
However, no need for that kind of defeatist talk (he continued briskly) the real challenge is in achieving something new, in doing what you, personally, know is a good job, and what we need for this role are fresh, keen, enthusiastic types who really want to get stuck in.

Don't all volunteer at once!

Seriously, we need some of that fabled "new blood" for 1984, a few new faces with fresh ideas and perspectives. If you're interested, then jot down a little 'platform', telling us who you are and what you can do, say 50-70 words is enough. Send this to Margaret Thorpe (36 Twyford Toad, Ward End) and it will appear in the January newsletter. Voting-in of officers will be at the AGM, and as usual, you need to be physically present; postal votes are not allowed.

It's been an interesting, and I hope reasonably successful year, and I've personally enjoyed my renewed involvement with the BSFG after a long period of absence. So much, in fact, that I've decided to stand for re-election; after all, there are a lot of projects we didn't have time for this year, and 1984 is a Special Year for Science Fiction fans!

-- PETER WESTON.



Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group on Friday 20th January. Nominations are requested for the following posts:

CHAIRMAN: must be very imaginative, dynamic and resourceful. Must be capable of restoring order at meetings and able to jolly the committee along. The candidate should have plenty of favours owing from authors, publishers, etc. and be able to coerce them into speaking to the group.

TREASURER: must keep meticulous records of the Group's expenditures etc. and able to say "NO" with a firm voice and fierce glare to all their *begging letters* demands.

SECRETARY: must be able to keep committee meeting minutes (light speed shorthand is a definite advantage!) and be able to type them up, make copies and send them out to the committee. The successful candidate will also be expected to address millions of envelopes.

PUBLICITY: must have plenty of ideas as may have to design a float for the Lord Mayor's Procession. You must also print and distribute posters and organize publicity drives.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: must have loads of free time for typing up reviews, news and other bits and bobs. Able to chase up erring reviewers and bully potential contributors. An iron will is an advantage.

Anyone interested? Only potential loonies need apply, of course. If you would like to have a go at any of these posts, please send a quick resume of yourself, together with the names of a proposer and seconder. Some of this year's committee members will be re-applying (what did I tell you? Loonies, the lot of them!). There are two posts as extra-curricular, non-voting committee members available.



CHRISTMAS

A two-panel comic strip. The top panel shows a cat dressed as Santa Claus, complete with a hat, beard, and suit, looking down with a thoughtful expression. The bottom panel shows a dog looking up at the cat, with a speech bubble indicating its favorite food. In the background of the bottom panel, there is a lit candle and a gift box labeled 'TO ZOGLAN'.

THIS IS THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN
LITTLE PUPPIES ALL OVER THE
WORLD AWAIT THE ARRIVAL
OF SANTA PAWS !!

MY FAVOURITE FOOD
AT CHRISTMAS ISN'T
TURKEY OR BEEF OR
EVEN XMAS PUD...

IT'S KITTY-CON-CARNE

WITH ZOLTAN

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ONE AND ALL.



QUIZ

1. Who wrote the novel RALPH 124C 41+ and for what is he principally remembered?
2. What do the following author's middle initials stand for: Philip K. Dick; Robert A. Heinlein; John W. Campbell?
3. Which classic sf films do the following lines appear in?
 - a. "An intellectual carrot -- the mind boggles
 - b. "Sex and death. But at least after death you're not nauseous."
 - c. "If this is the best they've got, in six months we'll be running this planet."
 - d. "Be good."
4. What do the following films have in common, and which is the odd one out?
THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN; KING KONG (the remake);
AN AMERICAN WAREWOLF IN LONDON; THE THING WITH TWO HEADS;
FUNHOUSE and SCHLOCK.
5. Bob Shaw has won two Hugo awards -- but in which category?
6. What does the title of Ray Bradbury's novel FAHRENHEIT 451 signify and who directed the film version?
7. What do the following famous directors have in common?
Cecil B DeMille; Sergei Eisenstein and Alfred Hitchcock.
8. Which of the following did not win academy awards?
BLADE RUNNER, FANTASTIC VOYAGE, OUTLAND, ALIEN, TIME AFTER TIME and TRON.
9. In which scientific field did E.E. "Doc" Smith gain his PhD?
10. Don Siegal played a taxi driver in the remake of his classis INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, but which director made a cameo appearance in the 1956 original?

By Steve Green

Well, that should give you something to do while you digest the turkey. The answers are somewhereabouts in this issue.

CONVENTION REPORT

CYMRUCON III -- 25th to 27th of November.

G-O-H: John Brunner.

Guests: Dez Skinn, Alan Moore, Gary Leach and
Dougal Dixon.

Last year in his report for this newsletter, Chris Morgan stated that the worst thing about Cymrucon II was the hotel; "Memories of the Central Hotel will linger on after all else is forgotten in the mists of cons past. It is much over-pricedseedy and decrepit...with a restaurant totally incapable of providing a proper breakfast for guests". I was there -- Chris did not exaggerate. Cymrucon III took place in the same Central Hotel -- it hadn't improved. Unfortunately this year the best thing about the convention was the Central Hotel.....

I arrived around 9pm on the Friday night only to be informed by the few fans hanging around the bar that the con didn't start until 10am the following morning. It was a quiet evening. The lack of atmosphere due to no programme, no music and virtually no people put a damper on the night and so despite the con's much acclaimed twenty-four-hour bar, I turned in comparatively early.

The following morning got off to a quiet start, but gradually the attendees arrived and things began to resemble a convention. After a couple of drinks I attempted to work out what was on the programme. This was not made easy by the fact that the programme sheet appeared to consist of rows and rows of ditto marks.....closer examination revealed that a lot of these -- at least in the first column -- referred to a separate list on another page entitled film show. This unwieldy system made it an awkward and frustrating experience to consult your programme book, and the ensuing confusion proved extremely annoying. This, combined with the fact that little on the programme had anything to do with mainstream SF (y'know, books and things....) left me very much to my own resources. Now I know that Cymrucon is meant to be a fringe con, and as such has to cover a wide variety of interests such as gaming, media and fantasy, but this time I'm afraid they didn't succeed in their aim to present a "general overview of the SF field". Not only this, they also failed to give value for money. At £9 attending I expect a full weekend convention, not one which begins at 10am saturday and finishes 4pm sunday, with that amount of hours it is not too difficult to fill a 24-hour film programme, no is it too expensive when you use a fairly average selection of quite old films.

Last year I greatly enjoyed Cymrucon because despite several organisational hiccups and a poor hotel, the vibrancy and energy of the other attendees proved infectious. This year there were fewer people, a shorter and poorer programme and there was an all pervading atmosphere of tattiness about the con. With more care and experience, I'm sure the committee will improve. But on this year's showing, I couldn't recommend the con.

-- MARTIN TUDOR.

Reviews

THE LAZARUS EFFECT by Frank Herbert and Bill Ransom, Gollancz, £8.95, 381pp.

Frank Herbert seems to be one of those writers of sf who are doomed never to raise any great passions in their audience (perhaps with the notable exception of *Dune*, which, shock horror, I haven't read). He's a competent storyteller, but people don't hold strong opinions on his work in the way they might with Ballard, for example. Although I haven't read much sf lately, in the past I've thought; "Herbert, ho hum, take him or leave him", and so I was able to approach this book in a fairly unbiased frame of mind.

This is the second novel to be set on Pandora, a world almost entirely covered with water and inhabited by two distinct groups of human colonists. The first group call themselves Mermen and consist of practically Earth-normal human beings with a high technology based upon electronics and the use of metals. Their people have occupied the ocean bottoms to escape the ravages of surface life to which the other group -- the Islanders -- are endlessly subject. The Islanders live (ever since the overwhelming of the last land surfaces of the planet), on vast floating islands of organic matter which have been moulded by genetic engineering and biotechnology into any function or shape required by the society. I've always been fascinated by the idea of organic machines -- spaceships and computers -- but Frank Herbert and Bill Ransom have managed to convey some of the disadvantages of living in intimate contact with such all-pervasive living material. All living things need to feed, and as a result, they also produce waste matter. Imagine a huge, floating island made up -- except for its human occupants -- entirely of brown smelly stuff which needs feeding (you actually have to paint nutrient onto the walls at regular intervals), and which as a result of its metabolism, smells enough to make you want to throw up. (Reminds me of Owen's Park.) Being wonderfully inventive and adaptive creatures though, the humans have stoically devised methods which make it easier to live with the stuff. Would you believe coloured nutrient swill? You'd probably get used to anything.....

Anyway, gosh, I'm letting my rhetoric lead me away from the synopsis I was trying to give you. The point is that the original colonists wiped out the indigenous sentient kelp which was on the point of helping mankind to achieve a telepathic gestalt -- a group mind which would have eliminated hate and war. As with similar eradication programs in the real world, there turn out to be serious ecological consequences as the kelp had been responsible for controlling ocean evaporation and currents, and consequently for holding the planet's meteorology in check. When this control was lost, the continental colonies were wiped out as giant planet-encircling waves overwhelmed all of the land surfaces.

The Mermen seek to once again tame the planet by reintroducing a genetically engineered variety of non-sentient kelp which will be subservient to mankind and thus cause the continents to be uncovered once again. The Islanders drift with the currents, have few metals, and have an outlook on life very much like that of the American Indian before they were 'civilised'. This is contrasted with the

militaristic, unyielding society of the Merman, and once again, Herbert is drawing a parallel with contemporary Western society which also seems to have very little respect for the biosphere.

It appears that an attempt was made in the past, to modify humanity for the planet in the hope that colonisation would be aided, but the only result has been that Islander society has a high degree of genetic damage which requires the existence of a Committee for Vital Forms to decide whether or not new births are so badly affected that they may have a detrimental effect on the genetic pool. No prizes for guessing what happens if it's decided they are. It sounds fascist, but Herbert describes the small population of Islanders fighting through tremendous adversity in such a way that you might feel inclined to ignore their eugenics programme.

The Mermen despise the Islanders for their genetic variability, whilst the Islanders envy the Mermen for their security and technology, and Herbert uses the situation to make comment on racist attitudes.

The land is being restored
The good life is coming
This is why Ship gave
Pandora to us

To us -- to Mermen
Not to Islanders.

So what have we got? Pretty much of an ordinary book, I suppose, with neither any great peaks or troughs -- the narration trundles along in its own pedestrian way. It wasn't so good that I felt I just had to go on reading at any point, which is what most books are like anyhow, except for works of genius, but it wasn't so bad that I couldn't pick it up at all. In all, a decent story, if not a particularly exciting one, but then I always was pretty basic in the attitudes I find essential in producing a good book.

Reviewed by CATHRYN EASTHOPE.

BRITAIN
IN
'87
FOR THE
45th
WORLD SF
CONVENTION



In order to advertise the British bid funds are needed. If you wish to help pre-supporting membership costs only £1. Send your money to:

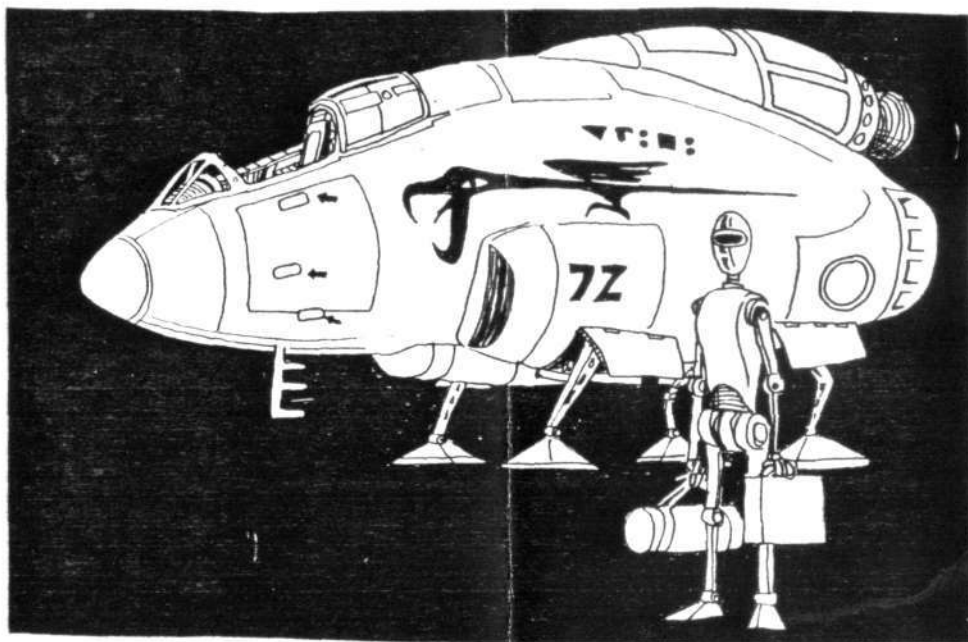
MALCOLM EDWARDS,
28 DUCKETT ROAD,
LONDON,
N4 1BN.

Or give it to MARTIN TUDOR at the next BSFG meeting. Pre-support now! You know it makes sense.

Andromeda Top ten

1. DR. WHO: THE FIVE DOCTORS by Terence Dicks. (Target £1.50)
2. LITTLE, BIG by John Crowley. (Methuen £1.95)
3. CITADEL OF THE AULTARCH by Gene Wolfe. (Arrow £1.95)
4. 2010: ODYSSEY2 by Arthur C Clarke. (Granada £1.95)
5. PAWN OF PROPHECY by David Eddings. (Corgi £1.75)
5. HORSE LORD by Peter Morwood. (Century £2.50)
7. CERES SOLUTION by Bob Shaw. (Granada £1.50)
7. AMTRACK WARS 1: CLOUD WARRIOR by Patrick Tilly. (Sphere £1.95)
9. THE QUEST by Jerry Ahern. (NEL £1.50)
9. WINDHAVEN by Lisa Tuttle and George RR Martin. (NEL £1.50)

This list was compiled by Andromeda Bookshop at 84 Suffolk street, Birmingham B1 1TA. Telephone 021-643-1999.



year's resolution to be tougher on pesky reviewers who turn thier reviews in late (or not at all), so you'd better watch out! Thank you very much to all those who did do a review for me this year and thanks to the publishers for sending the books. Thank you to Tim Stannard for the use of his photocopier, to Kall Kwik for the reducing and to the Kingshurst Neighbourhood Centre for helping out when Tim's 'copier was indisposed. Thank you Pauline Morgan, for your kind offer to let me be co-editor at the begining of this year, I had some valuable experience while helping you. Very special thank you to Phill Probert who has pasted-up headings and artwork with nary a complaint, and carted reams of paper all over the place. And thank you also to my team of artists; Matt Brooker, John Dell, Phill Probert, Dave Haden and Steve Green. If there are any more artists out there, please get in touch with me. News this month is from Locus, Thyme (by Roger Weddell of Australia) and Steve Green. Thank you to all my contributors. I am Eunice Pearson and I live at 32 Digby House, Colletts Grove, Kingshurst, Birmingham B37 6JE and I wish you all a happy christmas (don't forget to hang your socks up!). See you all next year.

BRITAIN COULD BE BRILLIENT, STUPENDOUS, FANTASTIC AND
GREAT IN 1987! SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL WORLDCON!

((This issue was printed by Tim Stannard and reduced by
Kall Kwik, Birmingham.))

1. Hugo Gernsback, later to edit the first sf magazine
2. Kendered; Anson; Wood.
3. a. THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD.
b. SLEEPER.
c. PLANET OF THE APES.
d. E.T.
4. The link is make-up artist Rick Baker. American Waterwolf is the only film in which he stays behind the camera, leaving the lead role to David Naughton.
5. Best fan writer.
6. It is the temperature at which paper burns; Francois Truffaut was the director.
7. All attempted (unsuccessfully) to film H.G. Wells' WAR OF THE WORLDS.
8. TIME AFTER TIME.
9. Food chemistry -- he was an expert in doughnut mixes.
10. Sam Peckinpah -- as the meter reader in Dana Wynter's basement.

Answers.....

