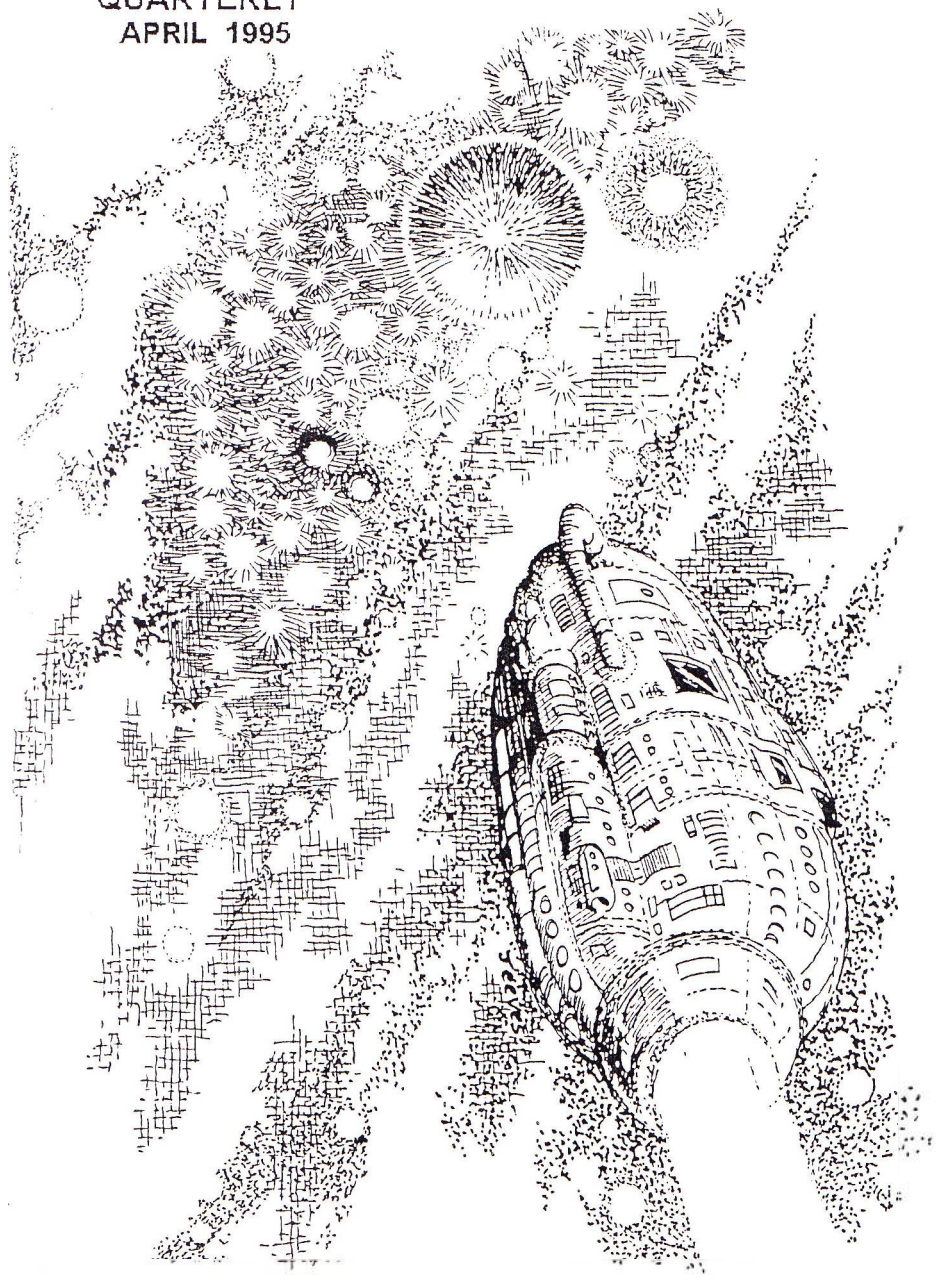


ERG 129
QUARTERLY
APRIL 1995

36th. Anniversary Issue



2.

ERG 129

QUARTERLY
APRIL 1995

TERRY JEEVES
66 RED SCAR DRIVE
SCARBOROUGH
N. YORKSHIRE
YO12 6RQ

36th. Anniversary Issue

ERGTORIAL RAMBLINGS

Greeting Ergbods,

The years roll by and the old mag, launched in 1959, has now reached its 36th. Year. For those of you who are surprised to receive this issue, let me explain. The last number of ERG was the last for those people who never bothered to respond in any way. So, I decided to drastically revise the mailing list. I now plan to carry on the old mag with a smaller page count and limit the circulation to old friends, trades and of course, LOCers. I've written to publishers cancelling review copies as it would be unfair to accept copies for a circulation of only fifty. You will let me know what you think of the changes won't you?

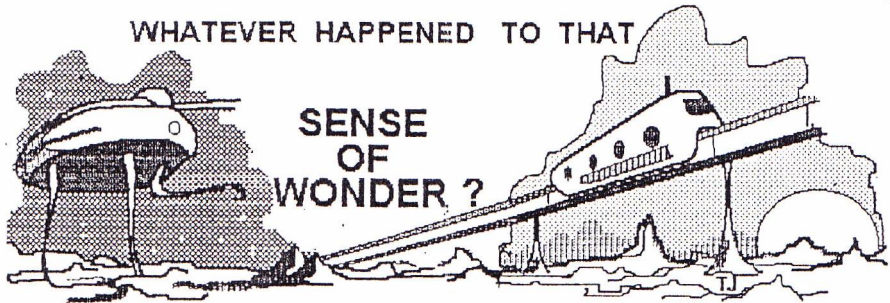
First the bad news. Our gas fire packed in so we had a new fire and boiler installed - £1339.00. Then the video acted up, but as it is 12 years old operating into a 20 year old Hitachi, we're not really surprised. Next the washing machine refused to empty - until I removed a chunk of metal from the pump. The next disaster came when the strap holding my Fujica SLR broke and dropped the camera on the floor doing naughty things to exposure meter and lens mount. I only had it repaired a few months back (£130.00), so the latest repair bill of £54.66 seemed cheap. Then the dish washer packed up and we had to call out a repair man from Hull, 40+ miles away. Cost, £34.66. Hopefully, that will be the last repair for a while, but I wouldn't bank on it.

Good news came when a letter from Algis Budrys, Editor of TOMORROWW, informing me that he would buy my story THE EINSTEIN INSTANT for \$75.00. I don't know when it will appear, so if you come across it, let me know. In the past, I've sold around 500 cartoons, numerous fact articles, a couple of computer programs, a children's story and one or two fantasy yarns, I even had a story printed in a Russian newspaper! but this will be my first straight SF sale.

Further surprise today. I received a copy of the Russian magazin 'Golden Age' (about the size of Omni), containing two of my stories. No, I don't read Russian, but I sent the yarns to Igor Smirnov some time back and he placed them with the magazine. Sorry, no cash, I sent 'em as freebies.

THE TIME HAS COME, as the walrus said. I'm wanting to sell off my SF collection of paperbacks, hardcovers, magazines, Aerospace etc. Items include 108 Doc Savage pbs (£200) and a near complete set of Astounding/Analog (only five missing) from 1930 to 1995. If you're interested, send an SAE for lists and say which you'd like. Please don't ask for 'the lot' unless you're really serious as this requires around 12 pages of printout.

No GENERAL CHUNTERING this time I'm afraid. Ken has had to beg off due to pressure of other affairs. He'll be back with us again when things settle down. All the best Terry



I began reading SF at the tender age of ten, way back in 1932. My tittle consisted of remaindered copies of Astounding, Amazing and Wonder; mainly from Messrs. Woolworths. However I also acquired some early, large size Amazing and Wonder mags - without covers - by trading 2d bloods with a friend. It was only later I discovered he had traded off his brother's collection. The latter had removed the covers in the vandal tradition of that era because one didn't flash garish magazine covers around.

I also shovelled in H.G.Wells short stories although his longer stuff seemed tedious. Verne's laborious epics, Mary Shelley's impenetrable 'Frankenstein' and the tediously satirical 'Gulliver's Travels' by Dean Swift were about the sum total of my SF encounters in those days. However, I soon discovered the unusual menaces faced by Doc Savage and the incredible monsters and devices encountered by G-8 and His Battle Aces as they opposed the evil Hun in the indestructible form of Herr Dokto Krueger.

The fictional style of that era has long gone. It was largely slam-bang action adventure. Take the favourite plot of the early thirties. A down-and-out hero, usually a college-boy desperately seeking work, would be hired by a scientist (often mad) to participate in a dangerous experiment. This involved testing a time-machine, dimensional travel, space travel, a new drug, telepathy, mind transfer or some other incredible scheme. Naturally, the scientist (almost inevitably, a professor) had a beautiful daughter who turned out to be a 'true brick', had a winsome smile, pearly-white teeth and golden hair. We never heard if she had a nice bosom or well-shaped legs. Inevitably something would go wrong, numerous dangers and problems had to be faced and overcome before the girl could be rescued from the villain's clutches. Safe home again and that was your lot.

Nevertheless, there seemed to be far more plot, tension, conflict and surprise than in say modern yarns. The staples were many. Action in lost continents, under the sea, in space, on new worlds. Menaces from aliens, new diseases, plants, runaway asteroids, robots, mental power, strange experiments, engineering feats, other dimensions, time travel, and the end of the world. You can no doubt add many more concepts to the list.

Since SF has become more socially acceptable and discovered by the various media, something has been lost along the way. Oh, we still get the action - bags of it, but where are the

new ideas to replace the old and dated one? Not many, we have nanomechanisms, DNA theories, save the whale/dolphin/furry thingy, and precious little else. The space ship is no longer gosh wow, it has merely replaced the domestic car for getting the characters to where the action is. Sometimes a time machine, worm-hole etc to move around, but once at the new location the yarn becomes pedestrian.

Robots have become AI computers, aliens seldom threaten us (usually it's us being nasty to them), mental wizards use ESP as normal, cyberpunk has replaced future shock. We no longer get great engineering feats such as 'Electropolis' 'Pacifica', 'Anton Moves The Earth' or the Doc Smith's epics. Modern writers seem unable to handle such scope whilst using modern styles, concepts and ideas. We still get the occasional world menace but it's usually an incoming meteor or a runaway microbe. Instead, we have endless dollops of ecology and are encouraged to be nice to ethnic minorities. We are forced to welcome lesbian or 'gay' central characters, accept four-letter words as everyday usage and believe that if a man meets a woman, they hop into bed three paragraphs later or sexual acrobatics. Villains can no longer be from minority groups or referred to by 'derogatory' terms -- Authors can have their characters swear and blaspheme but not call 'em nasty names. Writers love to see gutter language, but fearfully avoid calling someone a queer; the modern moral code seem it's OK to offend anyone except the PC.

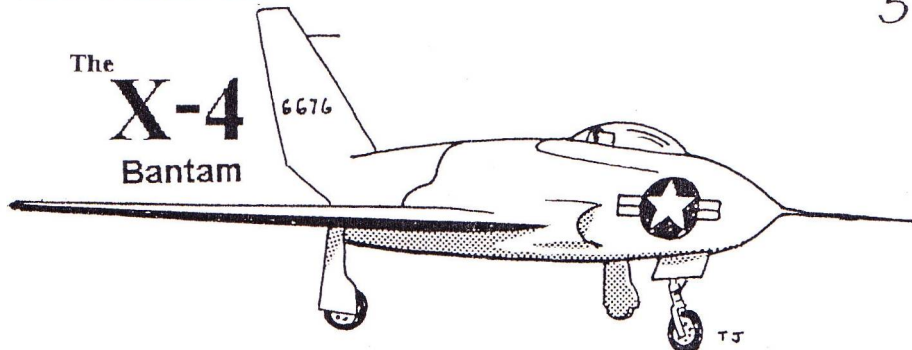
No, I do NOT want a return to the SF of the 'old days'. Those yarn had pace, plot, climax and brimmed with ideas -- but the writing style was almost totally hack. What I would like to see is a modern writer produce ideas as good as the old days but write them in a more modern style. Sadly, the good and the memorable SF is now a rarity. That's why anthologists mine the pre-1960 seam. I index all my Analogs and have to make notes of each story as I finish it. The yarns are so banal that if I leave the job until later, its memory will have faded. Nearly all modern SF is bland, lacks plot, climax and a decent ending. Worse, it's pedestrian. In short, whatever happend to the Sense Of Wonder?

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SOME 'INDISPUTABLE' FACTS

1. Scientists knew the world was flat
2. Mathematicians proved that a bee cannot fly
3. Wise men knew stones could not fall from the sky
4. People would die in trains at speeds of 30mph or more
5. Flying machines are impossible
6. Man powered flight is impossible
7. Space flight is impossible
8. Computers will never play chess
9. Chess playing computers will never beat a grand master
10. Computers will never achieve artificial intelligence

Scientists never seem to learn. Some never stick to 'maybe', 'unlikely', or 'improbable', but prefer to put their necks on the block and wait for the chopper of progress to come along.

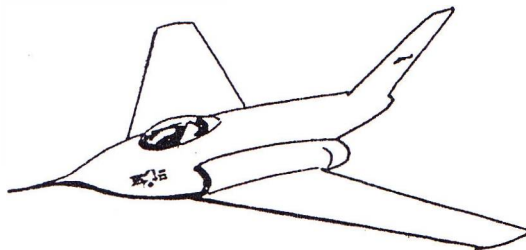


The Northrop X-4 was not designed to smash records for height and speed; its purpose was to test out the theory that a tailless aircraft would avoid the problems of interacting sonic shock waves between wing and tailplane. An unexpected bonus was the discovery that its large, split airbrakes allowed it to simulate the landing characteristics of various fighters.

The Northrop Company was chosen because of its experience with tailless designs and flying wings such as the B-35 bomber. The company was awarded a contract to build two machines. The X-4 appeared as a small, beautifully streamlined, swept-wing monoplane powered by two Westinghouse engines of 1,600lbs thrust each. The first machine flew in December 1948, the second following in June 1949. Because of NACA requirements for instrumentation space, the aircraft could only carry enough fuel for a 45 minute flight. To get round this, at a later date, an ugly, bulbous extra tank was fitted beneath the fuselage.

The first X-4 only made ten flights before being retired as a source of spares for the other - which flew 72 flights before the program was cancelled because of persistent fuel leaks. The second X-4 ended up in the USAF College in Colorado. Maximum speed achieved during the tests was Mach 0.92 and an altitude of 42,300ft was reached. No serious accidents marked the flights, but various troubles were experienced such as undercarriage lock-ups, pitch, roll and yaw problems as well as the fuel leaks. The results of the tests showed that the tailless design was not the answer to supersonic flight as it introduced its own instability problems.

STATISTICS Length..23ft Span..27ft Speed..630mph



6.



A.V. CLARKE, 16 WENDOVER WAY, WELLING, KENT DA16 2BN

The kernel of the article towards criminals. If 'society' didn't make them so (rather the inequality in society), then it seems that either the delinquent has learnt these particular mores at home, or has just been born evil. If the first alternative is correct, then that just moves the problem a generation back. If there's something in the genes that direct people to law-breaking lives, there's nothing to be done. Seems to me this shifts one's opinion to the theory that inequality in society is the cause. @ I don't agree. 'inequality' may be ONE of the formative causes, but not THE one. As for 'born in the genes'. If pianists, singers, geniuses, artists etc can be 'born', why not criminals? I and my pals were brought up 'unequal' without any of today's 'essential' goodies and we didn't turn to crime. I'd say criminals develop from a combination of causes - greed, parental attitudes, TV and film examples, peer group pressure, opportunity (all those open, 'help yourself' shop stalls and so on. @ Desert Island Delights must have been a joy to write, delving back to memory. My list would include T.C. McClary's 'REBIRTH', and shame on you for missing out Weinbaum. @ He was never a favourite of mine - like Bradbury, I found him too twee. @ Very good reproduction of the SCIENCE FICTION cover, how was it done. @ First I photographed the cover, then had a photocopy made in black and white. I pasted this into the master and send it off to the printer. @

ROGER MADDINGTON, 4 COMMERCIAL ST., NORTON, MALTON, N.YORKS YO17 9ES

I'd applaud some of your Desert Island choices, but 'favourite SF books'? 'HOBBYIST' was memorable as my first introduction to SF in a Crispin-edited 'BEST SF' collection, but in no way book length. @ Admitted, I included some short stories. @ My own selection for Hardback Heaven:- A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITS, THE STARCHILD TRILOGY, THE FOUNDATION TRILOGY, CITIES IN FLIGHT, PAVANE, PAST MASTER, WASP, TIGER! TIGER!, and WAY STATION. Have to say I'm not sure about Doc Smith. One of my favourite Sixties magazine, IF was hyping 'The Publishing Event of The Decade' -- the serialisation of 'SKYLARK DUQUESNE'. I was gosh-wowling along with the rest until I realised, "Hold on, I've never even seen the previous Skylark novels". @ Ah you had to read 'em (and the Lensmen) in that pre-SF-flood era of innocence and immaturity when IF you were lucky, you found one SF magazine a month. @

WED BROOKS, 713 PAUL ST., NEWPORT NEWS, VA 23605, USA

The idea that hunting is essentially evil and should be banned is more widespread in England than here, I think. I have no desire to hunt and kill animals for 'fun', but it wouldn't bother me if I needed the food or the skin. @ I think that is the general attitude over here; apart from a few vegetarian 'Thou shalt not kill types'. Killing animals for food, clothing or simply because they are too numerous and causing damage seems quite fair to me. Just going out to shoot or tear something to pieces simply for 'pleasure' shows a warped mind. @ I can see why your drama teacher wept over that play. Still, it would be fun to produce at a convention. @ Feel free @ Slater mentions the old PC term, 'mundanes' - perhaps we could call them 'dopes' @ how about 'The Unenlightened'? @

ALAN BURNS, 19 THE CRESCENT, KINGS RD. STH., WALLSEND, N.TYNESIDE, NE28 7RE

The X-3. Can I ask what is gained by such speed? As I understand, a plane would take the length of England to turn. Was there not a story in Analog about of some chap in a jet that got blown back to 1916 and found that the only way he could shoot down the villains was to drive into the lot of them and smash them into sticks. @ Speed gives the edge in combat whether to run or fight, in civilian life it gives you shorter travel time and longer at your holiday destination. Turning circle is much much less than the length of England, just a few miles and at the speeds and weaponry involved, takes no longer than a WW2 engagement. The story was 'Hawk Among The Sparrows, by Dean McLaughlin. July 1968. When his proximity fused missiles went straight past the wooden aircraft, he didn't fly into the enemy planes, but aimed his sonic booms at them and air pressure did the rest. Truly, all knowledge can be found in fanzines. @ Desert Island Delights, my preference pretty well equals yours but where could one plug in one's computer to write LOCs for ERG? @ Have a mind-powered generator or use a ball-pen. @ Fanzines, I wonder if you would mind saying that unsolicited fanzines ar not read, but go straight into the garbage. The two exceptions are ERG and STET. @ Fanned, you have been warned. @

ROGER WADDINGTON 4 COMMERCIAL ST., MORTON, MALTON, W.YORKS YO17 9EB

Re Analog, would you believe I managed to plough my way through all of Stardance? @ Stout fellow. @ Even though I'm one of those who find the whole idea of Modern Dance totally ludicrous @ Better than Classical Ballet though. @ All this trying to express emotions by hopping and leaping about. I suppose zero gravity might make a difference @ Yes, you couldn't jump or leap, only bend and wriggle in one spot. @ But I still can't take it seriously. @ I call it the 'Emperor's New Clothes' syndrome. Only the 'wise experts' can understand it. @ The computer's certainly done its bit toward freeing the slaves by getting rid of all the hard work when you want to send out submissions. I'd put on-screen editing in first place that you can try, try again to get it right without wasting any paper at all. @ Dead true, doing ERG on a manual typer and two dupers, then collating everything was a real bind. As for editing - wizard. Did you know that Ken Lake now has a laptop computer? So much for the man who 'always produced perfect copy' from a manual at the first go and thought too much of his eyesight to use a VDU. @

ALAN SULLIVAN, 30 ASH RD., STRATFORD, LONDON E15 1HL

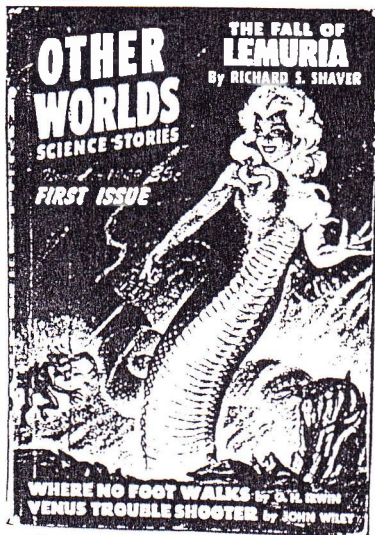
'Thanks For The Memories', James Verran. An informative piece. The manual with my notebook PC made no mention of the 'memory effect' and I only found out about it some time later when I was getting problems with the battery pack not charging properly. This was after about a year's use. I asked around a few of my more technically knowledgable friends and found out the harsh facts. We live and learn. @ I was caught in the same trap with an electric shaver. One would think a fairly sound lawsuit could be brought against non-informing manufacturers. @ 'General Chuntering' The fannish/mundane borders are not as clear cut as they were once thought to be. Such is life. On serial stories: Dont forget, it's not just the time it takes to get the whole story, but the anti..icipation factor between episode. @ Not for me, I save all the bits first. @ As to "lengthy" books, is it only that they seem to go on forever? Any idea how long the average Chung Kuo book is @ Too long @ On the business of bookselling: That's the whole problem, it's no longer a fun thing to do. It's a mean, cut throat Business with a Capital \$.

OTHER WORLDS

SCIENCE STORIES

The first issue appeared in November 1949, cost 35c, was edited by Robert N. Webster and had 160 pages which, being on thicker pulp paper made the magazine seem a hefty buy. Cover and interior illustrations were by Malcolm Smith. The issue contained five stories and several brief filler items.

The cover illustrating Richard S. Shaver's *THE FALL OF LEMURIA* depicted a snake-woman blasting some strange creatures. The tale was a way-out pot-boiler about an ancient star-faring race fleeing its enemies and becoming marooned on Earth as Atlanteans. Their descendants living on in underground caverns. Purported to be true (and actually believed by many fans), the drivel ended with a Lemurian alphabet and glossary.



WHERE NO FOOT WALKS, by G.H. Irwin has Venus as a former prison planet where the Carians (more dwellers underground). enslave Earthmen, including Lee Grim, who is in love with the beautiful Venusian princess Naritza. You can guess the rest.

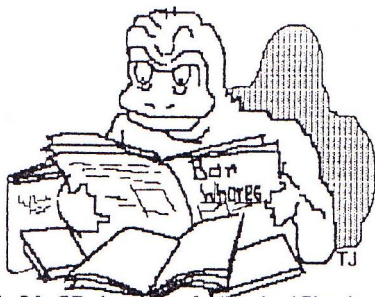
Craig Browning perpetrated *SEVEN COME A LOVIN'*, in which a robot helps one young lover with his girl by ensnaring his rival in a 'time stasis' which causes him to age rapidly. But when he is released, the fickle woman prefers him because he looks more mature.

Touted editorially as an 'Astounding-quality' yarn, was *THE MIRACLE OF ELMER WILDE* by Rog Phillips. Wilde could foretell the future, has an intelligent python to nurse his daughter and is called on to help the Government against alien invaders. He wins out, gets the girl, rescues his kidnapped daughter and they all move in with the ancient snake race. The aliens? Oh, they sort of get forgotten somewhere along the last page. Astounding stuff? NO WAY!

John Wiley's *VENUS TROUBLESHOOTER* has a hero sent to sort out a production problem. He boards a spaceship carrying an eight-foot, invisible Venusian ghost. This wight is really a master hypnotist who plans to enslave Earth, but who is going home for some unspecified reason, (mid-tem leave?). The villain deliberately wrecks the craft on a Venusian iceberg! but is foiled by the hero. The original production problem is hidden away. A totally contrived and stupid yarn.

Miraculously, *OTHER WORLDS* lasted for 45 issues. With material like this, no wonder SF got a bad name. ***

Books In Brief



BURNING BRIGHT by Tom Doyd, ROC £4.99 is the latest 'Shadowrun' yarn set in a 21st. Century America where magic has returned along with trolls, orcs, mages and others. Mitch Truman has gone missing, so his father hires Kyle Teller to find him - but beneath the city something evils is growing, so the 'milk run' proves tricky. In the 'Earthdawn' series, TALISMAN edited by Sam Lewis, ROC £4.99, is a collection of six tales sharing a long-gone era when magic and monsters were common and humans were menaced by Horrors. There's a magic amulet, a woman facing a horrible fate, a ghoul, a village unable to buy protection spells and others. I'm all in favour of shorter fantasy as distinct from endless series of magic-wielding Princesses against evil Dark Lords. TITAN present THE CRUSADE, £4.99, another in the Dr. Who Scripts series. First aired in 1965, it sees the Dr. return to 15th. Century Palestine to become entangled in the Crusades. You also get background information, production details and a cast list. Great for dedicated 'Who' fans. In the Star Trek Adventures series is THE FATE OF THE PHOENIX by Marshak and Culbreath, Titan, £4.50. This is the sequel to 'The Price Of The Phoenix' and has two Captain Kirks. Unrest disturbs the various races and the old enemy Omne is suspected. Excellent action adventure. Another Titan, THE NITPICKER'S GUIDE FOR CLASSIC TREKKERS by Phil Farand, large-size, £7.99 and appx 400pp., sets out to list every blooper, inconsistency and error in the original series. It details each of the 79 episodes plus the pilot and the films, gives a capsule plot precis then picks out all the nits. It seems a shame to love ST so much then go to so much time and effort listing its weaknesses. Me, I like to watch and enjoy. THE CRYSTAL STAR by Vonda McIntyre, Bantam £10.99. A Star Trek Adventure in which Skywalker and Solo are off seeking lost Jedis when Leia's children are kidnapped. She and Chewbacca don disguises (!!) to pursue a trail which leads to a far system with a strange sun. Here they meet Luke and Han as well as a former Imperial and an alien with awesome powers. Can they rescue the children and escape before the crystal star exerts its forces?

GARLANDS OF FANTASY: The Art of Linda & Text, N.Suckling. Paper Tiger £12.95, has 130, A4 pages absolutely crammed with top-quality, full-colour artwork. Fantasy, faerie, strange landscapes and weird creatures in themes including, 'Middle Earth', 'Folklore & Legend' and others. The accompanying text gives biographical details of the artists and technical anecdotes on how they work. It never gets in the way of the paintings, but adds depth and interest. An excellent Christmas present for any art-lover. THE JULIE BELL PORTFOLIO Paper Tiger £12.95. 28 Colour Plates and a massive A3 size (42x29cms). Julie is a body-builder and as these spectacular paintings show, the equal of her husband in the art field. All the erotic illustrations show superb humans, or humanoid creatures and mechanoids. Anatomically super-perfect, each could be framed into a striking wall enhancement. If you have the room, show the lot, they're all well worth it. A shame to spoil the book, but then you could see 'em all the time.

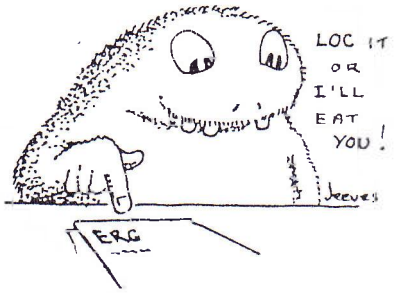
SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM Ed. Joe Sadler, Greenwood Press, \$55.00 A collection of essays by fans on fandom, fanzines, clubs, conventions, collecting, apas, history as well as chapters on European, French, Chinese, Japanese and British fandom (I wrote the latter five years ago, so it's dated). You also get a bibliography, a glossary of fanspeak and potted notes on the contributors. It ought to be on every fan's shelf, but at \$55.00, I doubt if it will be.

THE BURKE'S PEERAGE WORLD BOOK OF JEEVES Burke's Peerage £21.95 I got an advertising flyer for this one. It tells me that contents include, "The most extensive worldwide registry of families bearing the Jeeves surname" ... "Informative chapters on .. early immigrants and their journeys ... statistical information about the Jeeves population --- the role of heraldry --- how to use the Jeeves Directory to trace a family tree." Apparently it is A4 size and comes with a Certificate of Registration!
It sounds fascinating - if you buy one, tell me all about it.

ARE WE ALONE? Paul Davies Penguin £5.99 Most SF fans have a keen interest in the possibilities of life elsewhere in the Universe. This book, based on a series of lectures opens with a brief history of SETI followed by speculation on how life arose on Earth. From here, the author examines the philosophical implications resulting from an alien contact. Would religious beliefs alter? Is Earth life unique or part of a giant spread? How long does life take to develop and how long can it exist? Why haven't we been contacted by others? All these and many more fascinating points are examined, such as the difference between intelligence and consciousness, between mind and brain as well as quantum theory and stellar evolution. A wide-ranging look at SETI and a must for everyone waiting for that 'First Contact'.

RISE OF THE ROBOTS Jim Murdoch Roc £4.99 Based on a computer game. On the planet Creda, society is stratified and regimented with an undercover group seeking reform. The powerful Electrocorp builds 'Supervisor', an intelligent robot to run its organisation, but the 'droid takes over. Coincidentally, the 'Thin Doctor' has just succeeded in transferring a human brain into a robot body. His creation is sent to overthrow Supervisor. None of the three factions really comes alive, but the story holds your attention, moves to an exciting climax - and then stops. You almost expect to see, "Don't miss next week's thrilling episode". Is it a trilogy? It doesn't say, but the ending begs more.

AN ANTHROPOMORPHIC BIBLIOGRAPHY..\$5.00 Compiled by Fred Patten, 11843 Jefferson Ave., Culver City, CA 90230-6322, USA.
A 36-page, beautifully produced listing of books and stories of animals, beasts, birds and other creatures operating in human ways. Profusely and expertly illustrated, if you go for yarns when animals act like humans, then this will help you trace down more of 'em. Incredibly, there's also an excellent fanzine, YARF: The Journal Of Applied Anthropomorphics, devoted to the theme - Only six pages, but card covers, terrific artwork and its pilot issue is FREE from YARF, PO Box 1299, Cupertino, CA 95015-1299



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GLITTERING SAVAGES Mark Burnell Hodder & Stoughton £16.99

A confrontation with a creature of evil and the shocking slaughter of two adulterous lovers set the opening scene for this gripping novel. Police seek the killer, so does researcher Chris Lang, who joins forces with Katherine Ross, sist of the murdered woman. The mystery hinges around the beautiful and multi-talented Rachel and her unexpected love for Robert, caretaker of her flatblock. A plethora of characters, explicit sex and a compelling mystery with a difference. IT hooks you from the start. Highly recommended.

NAILED BY THE HEART Simon Clarke Hodder & Stoughton £16.99

Things move very smoothly for Christ and Ruth Staniforth when they buy an abandoned sea-fort near a village once an ancient religious site. Off shore lies the scuttled wreck of a vessel commandeered by cutthroats. Terror begins as a time of power approaches, the sea things besiege the Staniforths and the villagers in the fort, seeking to seize the coming power of an ancient god. There's the usual mandatory sex and a Deus Ex Machina ending, but the steadily escalating menace never lets the tension flag.

INSANELY GREAT Steven Levy Penguin £7.99

The story of the creation of the Macintosh computer, the development of PCs and the invention of the 'mouse'. It is NOT a story of bits, bytes, or nuts and bolts, but of the individuals concerned (warts and all); their ideas, rivalries and aspirations. Levy explains the strengths and weaknesses of earlier models, 'Alto', 'Lisa', and 'Apple'. The company's near collapse and rescue by DTP. The story of the people and their total dedication to an ideal as they chase a dream - and overcome all obstacles in order to catch it.

THREE NON-SF TALES OF VIOLENCE AND HORROR

FREAK Mark Burnell N.E.L. £4.99

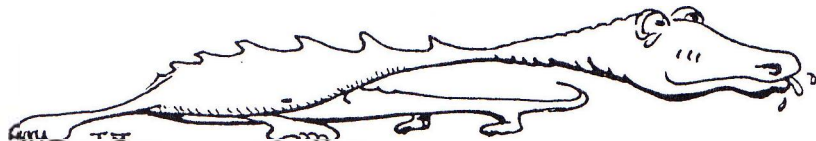
When Christian Floyd rescues Gabriella Fiorini from a violent mugging he discovers he has miraculous healing powers. They cause him to lose his girl, his job and nearly his sanity. Hounded by reporters and menaced by an obscure cult, he is forced to a public demonstration of healing which brings dire results.

JACKALS Charles L.Grant N.E.L. £5.99

Fleeing jackal-like humans after her car was tailgated over a cliff, Rachel finds refuge with Jim Scott, a hunter dedicated to wiping out the sub-humans. Their next attack is foiled, but then other packs arrive and things take a totally unexpected twist. Implausible people in implausible situations but plenty of violence.

THE LATE SHOW Johnn Douglas N.E.L. £5.99

To prevent closure of his ailing cinema, Bill Anders makes a pact with an undying power. The result makes him a violent murderer and brings a terrible change and disastrous climax to an all-night showing of horror films. Full of slob culture characters, obscenities, booze, drugs, sex and gore.



THE DEUS MACHINE Pierre Quillette Hodder & Stoughton £5.99

2005, and America is in Depression. A civil servant is eliminated when he stumbles across a covert organisation hiving of public funds to build supercomputer, DEUS, for developing biological weapons and designer drugs. Then DEUS develops AI and a sub program begins a horrific campaign. Multi-level menace, human and bio-engineered, as Computer expert Riley tries to aid DEUS and uncover the organisation.

Tasks which leads down a path to ruthless extermination. Plenty of sub-plots in a superb hardcore SF epic. Highly recommended.

WORLD WAR: TILTING THE BALANCE Harry Turtledove Hodder & Stoughton £16.99

This is the second volume in Turtledove's re-writing of the history of World War II during which lizard-like aliens arrive to conquer Earth. (The previous one was 'World War II: In The Balance'). Despite the former inimical world powers pulling together, a final alien victory seems inevitable. But, even as their hold tightens and more territory is lost, resistance fighters carry on the struggle by using Plutonium stolen from the invaders to make an atomic bomb. If you like alien invasions and alternate history, then put this 480pp blockbuster on your shopping list.

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SCHRODINGER'S CAT - (ASTROPHE)

Pick up almost any book on cosmology or quantum theory and in no time at all, you'll meet up with Schrodinger's ill-fated cat. This unfortunate moggie is enclosed in a box along with a radioactive atom and a particle detector linked to the release mechanism of a cyanide canister. IF the atom fissions, the detector is triggered and the cat dies. If the atom does not fission, the cat survives.

The crux of the matter is that until the box is opened, the experimenter has no idea whether his pet is alive or dead. Until the opening, some big-brains say the cat exists in a nebulous half-dead half alive state as a 'probability wave'. Opening the box 'collapses the wave' into one state or the other. I'm not sure what esoteric advantage this has over simply tossing a coin - and then keeping it covered for a while, (does the coin have both sides on top?) Can anyone tell me what is so unusual about not knowing the result of an action until you look? Does a cup of tea have both sugar and no sugar until you taste it?

What really puzzles me is this. Suppose we put experimenter A along with his boxed cat in a sealed room and put experimenter B outside. For both A and B, the probability wave has the cat in limbo. Then A opens the box, the wave 'collapses' and the cat takes one definite state -- or does it? As far as experimenter B is concerned, he doesn't know the box has been opened and to him the probability wave remains uncollapsed! Want to make it even more complicated? Line up a few hundred people and tell them, one by one, the result of opening the box. Right away, you have a situation of umpteen collapsed waves - and umpteen uncollapsed. Pity the poor cat oscillating in and out of existence.

I suspect there's something fishy about all the mystique surrounding Schrodinger's cat - or it really a red herring? Anyone who can shed light on this situation, please let me know.

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