

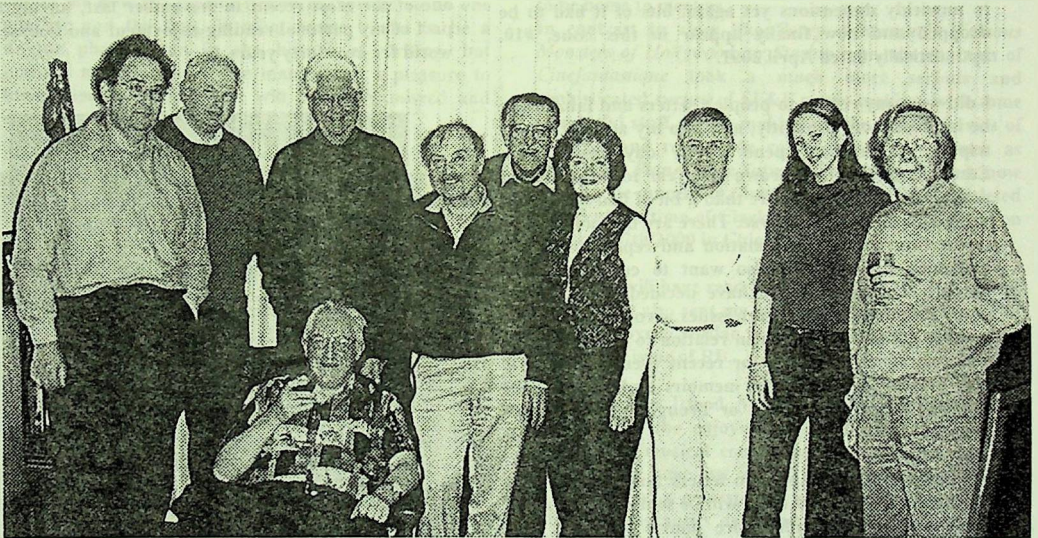
The Rubbish Bin(ns)

Number 10 April 2001

A personal zine produced by Merv Binns
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From left, standing, Carey Handfield, Bruce Gillespie, Race Mathews, Bruno Kautzner, Merv Binns, Helena Binns, Dick Jensen, Madeleine Harding, Lee Harding. Seated: Bill Wright. (Photo by Iola Mathews)

A few of "the usual suspects" at one of Race and Iola Mathews' video evenings

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LETTERS AND FANZINES

'THE MANY FACES OF FOYSTER'

BOOK AND FILM REVIEWS

EDITORIAL:

RUBBISH IN THE BIN

April 2001

Dear Readers,

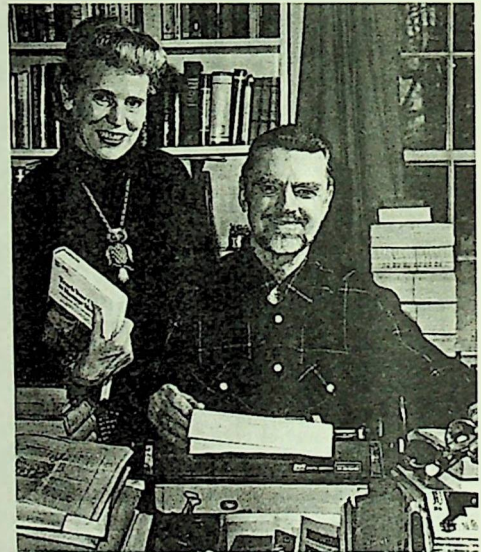
After a lot of huffing and puffing we finally got issue #8, dated September, out late last year (in fact, just in time for Christmas) as a special Movies issue, the cinematic content having displaced the rest of what was originally intended to be a more balanced production including book reviews and replies to letters and fanzines etc. The other half, dated January 2001, finally made it into print in March as issue #9. Since the content had grown to unwieldy dimensions yet again, bits of it had to be dropped and now finally appear in this issue, #10, optimistically dated April 2001.

I did want my replies to people's letters and fanzines to be in print more promptly, and also my account of our trip to Ballarat to spend a few days with Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown last year to be published sooner. Leigh has had more than a bit of bad luck, but I will get to that in due course. There are now and will be in the future, other information and replies to friends and such that we will also want to cover relatively quickly. Consequently we have decided to revise our plans for current and future issues accordingly. We do want to get RB out sooner in relation to reviews, LOCs and references to current or recent events, so we will give priority to these, and memoirs and such will be included when convenient, or brought out as special issues.

This issue updates replies to letters and comments on fanzines and such, and there will be some movie and TV comments, along with more movie memoirs and opinions on movies seen past and present, adding current reviews, letters of comment and such. I would like to do a regular one page or more EXTRA on the internet, but the long and frustrating story of our attempts to get onto it and communicate with friends by e-mail continues, so that will have to wait. A friend tried to log us on to a service provider, *FREEONLINE*, but there is presumably something wrong with our Netscape program as it will not allow us to continue or get out of it, so we are now in a frustrating situation which we do not know how to remedy. Help !!!!!!

TIME MARCHES ON

As one gets older, it is inevitable that friends, acquaintances and the people who have been predominant, loved and appreciated and shining bright in your firmament, are suddenly not there any more. When you are working for people, becoming in many cases friends, as I have with my gardening customers, you carry on from week to week until you find that you are not doing this job or that any more because the people have passed on, and you realize that nothing is ever permanent. As I became involved with the SF world, I came to appreciate many authors who came to prominence in my time - writers like Asimov, Heinlein, Simak, Van Vogt, White, Herbert and L.Sprague de Camp, all of whom have left the scene, with de Camp one of the most recent in November last, having been part of my personal reading enjoyment and bookselling world for over forty years.



*Katherine Crooke de Camp
and L. SPRAGUE de CAMP*

Another of my favourite authors of yesteryear has left us, GORDON R. DICKSON. He died in Richfield, Minneapolis, USA on the 31st of January, from the effects of asthma, which the report in *Locus* indicated had plagued him all his life.

He produced over a hundred short stories and fifty-five novels. His *Dorsai* stories being his most widely read and acclaimed, which I certainly enjoyed reading. His humorous *Hoka* stories were also well loved. When he visited us here as Goh of the SYNCON '79 SF Convention in Sydney and if I remember correctly he also visited Melbourne briefly. He told us of his grand plan to produce a series of writings featuring the mercenary soldiers through history, leading into the *Dorsai* tales or *The Childe Cycle*, which we all knew. He studied writing at the University of Minnesota with some famous instructors such as Sinclair Lewis and his contemporaries included Clifford Simak, Carl Jacobi and Donald Wandrei. A half-brother, H. Lovat Dickson was a well-known publisher between the two world wars. His first professional story was written in cooperation with his friend Poul Anderson, followed by one in *Astounding* magazine in 1951. I met him at Syncon '79 and briefly again at conventions overseas. For a few years after, he sent Christmas cards to my father and me, but always managed to get dad's name wrong. That was probably when I was publishing Australian SF News in the 1970s. It never ceases to amaze me how the science fiction authors relate to one another and the fans, in what seems to me to be a unique phenomenon in the history of writing, but perhaps not. He was a nice man, it was a pleasure to know him and I know he will be sorely missed and remembered well by us all.



GORDON R. DICKSON at SYNCON '79

(Photo by Vera Lonergan)

They and others have all left us a wealth of wondrous tales that we, and readers to come, will be able to appreciate for ever. The same goes for the movie actors who have entertained me all my life, like Humphrey Bogart, Cary Grant, Bette Davis, the Marx Brothers, and many others long gone, who we still see on the box (and whom I will have more to say about in a future movie issue of RB) and on the ever growing range of DVDs.

A guy I really appreciated was Walter Matthau - and who could ever forget *The Odd Couple*, *Grumpy Old Men*, *The Front Page*, and many other movies in which he created memorable characters. We lost him late last year. Still movie related, I thank my friend Ross Cozens in the USA for sending me a newspaper cutting reporting the demise of Frederick S. Clarke, the founder/editor of the SF&F movie magazine *CINEFANTASTIQUE*.

I started importing the magazine at Space Age Books soon after the first issue was released in the early seventies and in 1973 when I was in Chicago, after attending TORCON, the World SF Convention in Toronto, Canada, Ross and I decided to visit Mr Clarke. However on calling at his home, following a phone call, we found that he was not able to be home to meet us.

In contrast to zines like Forry Ackerman's *Famous Monsters of Hollywood*, or *Starlog* even, the contents of *Cinefantastique* took a much more serious and sophisticated survey of SF&F movie making, with some wonderful stuff on the making of the classic movies of the '70s and retrograde coverage of movies such as *Forbidden Planet*. The future of the magazine is now said to be uncertain, but six issues were completed ahead at the time of Clarke's death at the age of 51, on October 17th 2000 in Chicago.



In #9 you will have read Ross's report of his trip to Iran in 1999. He also sent me a report of his trip last year to Lebanon/ Syria/ Jordan in October, which I will reprint in a future issue of RB.

My American friend Michael Waite mentioned in a recent letter the enjoyment he got from watching or listening to musical comedians such as Anna Russell, and now we have lost one of the cleverest of them all, Victor Borge, a pianist with a difference, whose crazy piano-playing antics delighted his fans for generations. Even at the age of around 90, he was booked for another tour of Australia this year, but alas he died on Christmas Eve.

Update 15th April 2001: Another old favourite who will be fondly remembered by those of us old enough to recall the irreverent antics of *The Goon Show* in the 1950s, and by the many admirers of his splendid Welsh tenor voice, Sir Harry Secombe (or 'Sir-Cumference' as he jokingly referred to himself in his more rotund times) died this week aged 80 To quote a media headline: "*Goon But Not Forgotten.*"



WILL THERE BE LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE?

We have seen and heard a lot recently on the various media about the new discoveries about the universe and how it all came into existence and the vast time and distances involved, as well as how tenuous our existence is, on this ball of mud we call Earth. Disease, weather, earthquakes and balls of fire from outer space could all simply return us to the galactic dust we came from in nothing flat, especially in relation to cosmic time and distances. It makes me start to think how insignificant our existence really is, and then I think... our scientists have found out all these things and we actually know where we are in this vast universe and they daily present us with concepts that are beyond the average person's ability to grasp. The human race, this tiny group of living beings on a small planet that miraculously brought us into existence, is actually aware of the universe around us, or at least some of us are aware. Perhaps the fact that we are aware means something. Then you look at the conflicts and animosity that abounds all over our small planet and how we are slowly destroying the environment, and all the living things in it, and you realise that the larger part of the human race is simply battling to survive and could not care less about the world as a whole or its place in the universe. I have always been the eternal optimist, but I am beginning to worry a lot about the future of our planet and I am very glad that I am living and enjoying the benefits that science and society has given me now, as in the future life may not be so easy.

RELATIONSHIPS

During my life as an SF fan I have made many friends, and I have talked about this at length previously. I was pleased that the Melbourne SF Club was the means of getting to know these friends and for the friends to know one another. A number found partners, people they would probably have never met otherwise and that pleased me, but I was always sad that I had not found a mate myself. However everything comes to those who wait, and although it took forty years the club eventually came through for me with Helena. I have found however that living with another person is not so easy and that it takes a lot of love, tolerance and understanding to stay together. In the past I could not understand how two people could get together and get married and then separate and I was very disheartened to hear of the breakups of some of my friends. Then again, my own parents had their problems and most likely only stayed together because of me. In my small group of people met through SF fandom, I can think of at least six couples who have split up. So be it, but I feel very sad about it. Being a married man now myself and no longer alone, I honestly do feel for all those who've had someone and are now on their own again.

By now you will have had enough of my melancholia, but I must tell you, if you did not read my report in the last RB, that John and Cheryl Straede have been separated in the worst possible way, in that Cheryl was

killed in a car accident last year, in which John was driving, and I am sure that you will join with me in sending him our earnest commiserations and assure him that all of his friends wish him well in the trying times he has yet to face.

To top off a disastrous year 2000, ending the millennium, our friend Leigh Edmonds was attacked by a couple of young punks in Ballarat where he lives with his wife Valma. They robbed him of only \$15, but left him with a broken jaw, which has not only given him a lot of pain and trouble, but prevented him from carrying out his work and research in his vocation as writer and historian. Going by his report in his latest SAPS contribution, *GRUMBLE XXXVII*, it is obvious that life will never be quite the same. Leigh has received lots of letters and cards from friends wishing him well, and I am sure that all my readers will join with me in also wishing Leigh all the best and trust that he will put this all behind him *poste haste*.

All of this has been later than I intended but time and finances dictate when we are able to get things done. Meanwhile I am working on my "Memoirs of Melbourne SF Fandom", which I hope to have out well in time for CONVERGENCE next year, when the 50th Anniversary of the Melbourne SF Club will be celebrated. We will be visiting our fan friend David Russell in Dennington, near Warrnambool late in March and I will tell you about that epic trip in due course. I am endeavouring to get all this typing done in between gardening, cooking, going to the movies and so forth, but winter is coming and I will feel more like staying inside and more like concentrating on what I am doing. I do not like cold and wet weather, but I can put up with that more than I can hot and sticky conditions. That's all for now.

MB.

LETTERS and FANZINES

The Fall/Winter issue of the science fiction review and commentary zine *NOVA EXPRESS* turned up recently. It is published by Lawrence Person, PO Box 27231, Austin, Texas 78755-2231, USA. It features a wide variety of subjects, including interviews with an author (Neil Gaiman), comic distribution, lists of the best SF books including the "Top Ten" and specific types of stories and other interesting revelations, and a critique of Brian Stableford's Future History stories. Everybody has different ideas as to the best of anything and as I would expect I certainly do not agree with a lot of the selections in the "Best Of" lists, but it is an interesting exercise even so.

The December 2000 issue of the Melbourne SF Club's zine *ETHEL THE AARDVARK* reports that 2000 was a good year for the club, with more people at meetings, new book shelves, and they are looking forward to an

even better year in 2001. I am not up with the politics of Melbourne fandom these days and I am not aware of the significance of the club's withdrawal as members of the 'MULTIVERSE' organisation, but I do hope that it does not cause bad feelings between fans and that it will not prevent co-operation in some circumstances between the groups in the future.

BANANA WINGS 16 is a very nicely produced zine from Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 26 Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey, CRO 6JE, UK. It again illustrates to me how the computer revolution has affected the fanzine publishing world. Lots of interesting reading including a history of the classic pulp magazine, *UNKNOWN* and a tremendous letter column with contributions from quite a few Aussie readers.

JAN FINDER's annual letter turned up, twelve pages of it, describing what he did over the year 2000, including attending lots of conventions and visiting friends all over. I must thank Jan again for organising a copy of the AUSSIECON ONE publicity film on video, with the extras for '83 and all, for me. It was sent to me by Mark Loney and I thank him very much also. Friends who had never seen it previously have now, and they complimented me on my fine acting performance... Well, they said it was all great fun at any rate, and it is really nice to have it to look back on the fun we had making the movie, but it saddens me that some fan friends of the era have gone their separate ways. I will cover the making of the movie as best I can, with photos, in future "Merv's Memoirs" columns.

JOE & GAY HALDEMAN have been sending me their annual letter also for quite a few years now, which I very much appreciate. They summed up the New Year nicely - "We thought that 2001 would be the future, didn't we?" - and sure enough we are in the future, but have SF writers really prepared us for it? Being an SF author in the USA sure has its perks, with trips to places and conventions all over, meeting friends and all. We will see them here again for the Natcon in 2002. They apparently believe in keeping fit, having cycled around to many of the places they visited during the year. Joe's new book *THE COMING* was released in Ace hard cover in December and *FOREVER FREE* was released in paperback.

MUMBLINGS FROM MUNCHKINLAND #16 edited by Chris Nelson, 23 Henty Street, Invermay, Tasmania 7248, turned up recently. Chris and Megan report the birth of their daughter, photos and all. The *Astounding* cover tribute, incorporating an Ed Cartier illo and baby Ruby Alida is very innovative, and as usual a bit of Aussie fan history about Sydney fandom from the late '30s on is included. A report on Chris's trip to the "Ackermansion" is a feature of the issue. As usual, Forry Ackerman was glad to welcome a visitor from Australia, as he did myself, Helena and other friends. Chris enjoyed the visit and has some nice photos, including himself with Forry, to illustrate his report.

Michael Waite's zine *TRIAL AND AIR* is his FAPA contribution for the #253 mailing last November. It features a nice coloured cover of posters from movies - *Things To Come*, *Metropolis*, *Destination Moon* and *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. He talks about buying a telescope in 1956, but joined the Air Force which put paid to that idea. I always wanted a telescope myself, but my mother bought me a good pair of field glasses, which I could never hold still enough to see much. Helena has binoculars that can be fitted onto a camera tripod, which allows us to get a much steadier view of the night sky, and a small refractor telescope which has enabled me finally to get some great views of the moon, including an eclipse, and I could actually see the rings of Saturn, which is very clear in our night sky now, along with Jupiter, not far from the constellation of Orion. Referring to Michael's comments on Stephen King's book *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* and his criticism of Murray (Will F. Jenkins) Leinster, what little I have read of authors' criticism of other authors' works, has never changed my enjoyment of many of said author's writings. I loved Murray Leinster when I first read him, probably in the '60s, but I did give *Wailing Asteroid* a miss because other members of the Melbourne Sf Club warned me off. *Forgotten Planet* I remember was one of his best. It was great to see the photos of us 'old farts' that Dick Jenssen sent you, included in your zine, so beautifully reproduced. It's Iola Mathews by the way, but Dick has probably told you that already. I will have a lot to say in future issues of my zine about about Melbourne fandom, and Lee Harding will get a mention in my Space Age Books memoirs, as he worked for me for the first three years or so. More about movies and stars also and I did like Gene Tierney, but I will have to think a bit before I decide who my favourite actresses were. *Wizard of Oz*, okay, it would have to be one of my all time favourites because I loved Judy Garland and I loved musicals... more on that later. Incidentally I am a hopeless chess player but Helena is pretty good and has given me away as an opponent, though I sometimes win at Scrabble.

SF COMMENTARY 76. I have said before, in as many words, that Bruce Gillespie's fanzines are the most professional looking amateur zines that anybody has ever produced, bar none. This loving tribute to George Turner reproduces probably the best of George's non-fiction writings. Superbly produced, and sporting Ditmar cover illustrations, incorporating an ethereal photo of George, it is one of those things I will treasure for the rest of my life. Well Done, Bruce!

Thanks again to Marc Ortlieb for sending us *THE AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION BULLSHEET*. It enables us all to keep up with what is happening in the Aussie SF world, carrying on a labor of love that I endeavoured to do myself in a much less efficient way in the ancient past of Melbourne fandom. Marc reports in a recent issue that Melbourne fan David Evans is now living and working in the USA and things are going well for him it seems. I am very pleased to hear this, because I have had some interest in David over the years, although I have only managed to catch up with him

briefly at SF conventions. David's father Jack was a journalist working for the now defunct Melbourne newspaper. *The Argus*, and later became editor of *Australasian Post*. Jack was a keen reader of SF and I used to keep copies of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* for him, when I was working at McGills Newsagency. He was always willing to give SF and the MSFC in particular a plug, and he did a nice spread in an issue of the *Post* with a photo of the club chairman Bob McCubbin reading a pulp magazine. Incidentally, Bob was a teacher, and I do not think the Education Department looked on his appearance in the magazine with much joy. One day Jack came into McGills all smiles, and told me that he had just become a father - yes, young David, but unfortunately father and son never got to know one another very well, as Jack died a relatively short time after David's birth.

It was great to learn also from the *Bullsheet* that Alan Bray's SF collection has found a fitting home at the Adelaide University, but I hope that they do not hide it away like they did the two silent movies that our late movie buff friend Harry Davidson unearthed back in the 1970s. Two practically new prints of Murneau's *FAUST* and a print of *METROPOLIS*, that when we screened it for Forry Ackerman, he saw bits in it that are not in the other versions he had seen. More about that later. They had been hidden away in Adelaide Uni for over forty years.

LETTERS OF COMMENT

On RB #8 - Special Movies Issue

From NOEL KERR, 86 Leila Rd., Carnegie, VIC 3163, Australia

Liked the layout on the front page.

Hell, I don't know how you manage to see all the films listed on the first couple of pages, I've only seen at the most about half of them.

MISSION TO MARS sounds rather interesting from your comments on it. I'm glad that it has a satisfying ending, unlike 2001 which I felt almost destroyed my enjoyment by leaving me completely up in the air on leaving the theatre. This type of treatment happens a lot in films and I do not go along with this rubbish (sorry!) about supplying your own interpretation to films. I go to the theatre to enjoy the film including the ending, which doesn't require the viewer to have the brains of a rocket scientist to tie up. (I can hear sounds of anguish out there)

So XENA was missed by most of us because it was shown during the Olympics. Yippee, hoo bloody ray!!!!

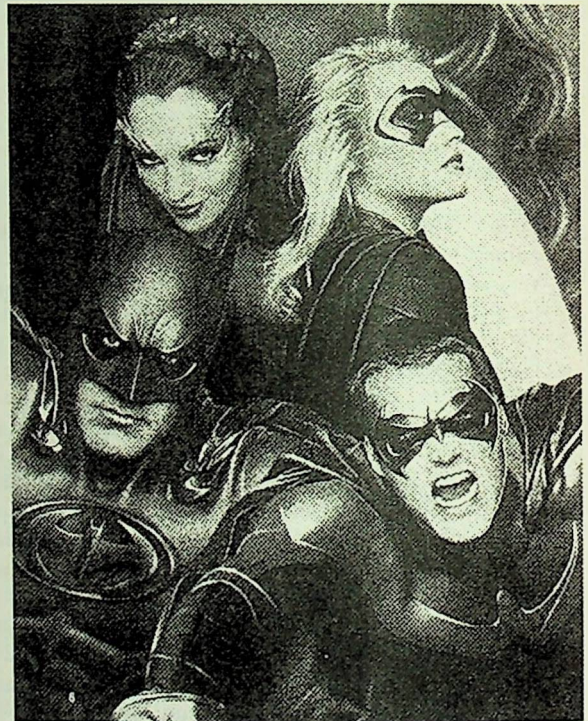
I also have mixed feelings on FARSCAPE although I did enjoy the one when they were thought to have landed back on earth.

You must join the large rank of folk who really enjoy Gilbert & Sullivan operettas. I'm afraid that the couple of

productions that I have seen left me with a bit of a yawn. I felt that having heard one song you have heard them all as they seem to follow a set formula. I must admit that I haven't seen either the MIKADO or the PIRATES. But then again I enjoy all aspects of jazz and maybe you could say that some of this type of music follows a set formula. I dunno! I just enjoy what I know.

You mention THE SCIENCE SHOW at the exhibition Centre. I didn't know about this as I'm sure Irene and myself would have gone along. It sounded most interesting. I did attend the Exhibition centre some months back to see the robot dogs in various designs, battle it out for a world title. I found this bloody interesting although I know nothing about the electronics behind them. It's always fascinating to see artificial intelligence at work.

".. comic strip garbage such as BATMAN & ROBIN..." What! Wash your mouth out there lad. This is one of the few remaining strips they have paid their dues and are still with us. (I'm getting a bit worked up now I'm coming to a close)



I enjoyed the X MEN, but found it hard to relate to the early Marvel comics version. But then again as I have found in the past it is very hard to carry the comic strip medium to the screen and it really doesn't bother me.

God, you mention TITANIC and THE PERFECT STORM. I haven't seen either, nor that Imax film you mentioned, I'll have to play the pokies more often as I just can't afford to see all the films I want to.

The hatred that the late Alec Guinness has spoken about over the script of STAR WARS may be saying a lot more about the quality of the film than is realized. You are hearing there the opinion of an expert actor who knows his trade.

SPACE AGE COWBOYS, BATTLEFIELD EARTH and THE DISH, and I haven't seen these so on we go to....

Personal Movie Memoirs. Now a bit of nostalgia, right up my creek. I could talk for hours on this topic and have done a lot of 1st draft work on my early life at the cinema. I'll let you have copies when they are finished. My first viewing of PINNOCHIO was at the Murrumbeena theatre and it left a strong visual memory in my mind. The orchestra you mentioned at the State Theatre was led by Stan Bourne who could play just about every instrument in the band and did so of an evening. Could you imagine a theatre paying the costs of a 14-piece band to perform one night a week, today? I thought it was great and well worth wearing a tie and taking a girlfriend to the theatre by taxi, it was an event which I still miss today.

Yes, I did see SUNSET BOULEVARD and had mixed feelings about it. So I am at least one up on you there. I still feel the first screening that we all went to of 2001 was at the REGENT. I can find out if you really need to know. (I think I was sitting behind Bangsund)

Unless I missed it you made no mention of going to the pantomimes. My mother took me to them every year and always we sat in "the Gods" as this was the best she could afford at the time. I didn't mind as it was the magic of the live theatre that I enjoyed, and still do.

You and Paul certainly attended a lot of free movies (You didn't share the tickets around much Merv.)

Those days upstairs in Somerset Place were amongst some of the best memories I have, particularly those movie nights. You remember that fund raising night when I brought along Alf Brown and Weg from the Herald to see those her.,hum. movies, and sold grog from the fridge? Well at least we made some cash for the club and gave you a fit watching the door.

To sum up... a very nice issue which both my wife and I enjoyed very much. We want the next issue straight away, so get to it Merv!

Noel

Thanks for your letter Noel, and the later article, which is great and I will use later! I shared your criticism of 2001: A Space Odyssey and although I did think the movie was great overall, the ending was a crock of unintelligible crap and nothing will ever convince me otherwise. The later movie was good in some ways, but the books Clarke wrote, particularly the last, 3001, were not very exciting.

Mission To Mars was on an entirely different level and where 2001 was an exercise in fancy film making, which has had a great influence on movie makers ever since, particularly SF, Mission To Mars is purely an adventure film, though well done for what it is.

By the way, Dick insists, as do others, that when we first saw 2001, it was in Cinerama at the Plaza, underneath the Regent.

All the TV series may have something going for them, including Farscape, which has interesting sets and SFX, while the concepts of some such as Star Trek, Babylon 5 and even Stargate are good but the stories often leave a lot to be desired. Farscape's stories are not great but I do like the characters and that goes a long way towards my enjoyment of any TV series or movie. Everyone has different tastes in music, but even if you do not like Gilbert and Sullivan music, Topsy Turvey is much more than their music, and is a great interpretation of the Victorian age and theatre. The Science Show overall was aimed mainly at the younger generation, but we did enjoy the talks and discussion very much. Sorry about Batman and Robin! I was deliberately trying to stir you up, I have been around Dick Jessen too much, and the influence of Paul Stevens from the Space Age days still lingers. (Attempts at similar types of humour at home here are not usually well received either.) Comics have their place and I enjoyed many of them in the past, but I have never been a fan in the full sense of the word. I can understand you not liking the movie X-MEN, but then again, how many books and stage plays - especially musicals like Irma La Douce, Paint Your Wagon or The Man of La Mancha - have also been butchered by Hollywood. They change the characters, introduce new ones and give a whole different interpretation to the stories than the original creator intended. Butchery!

No, I do not agree with you on Alec Guinness's criticism of Star Wars. He was just being a snob, and what did he have to complain about? He made a mint out of the movies because of his contract, which entitled him to a share of the profits. (Helena adds that he was the only actor in it who was smart enough to insist upon such a contract. He knew exactly what he was doing!) My opinion is that he just did not want people to think that such a highly rated thespian as he had actually enjoyed playing such a ridiculous role, in such a trashy movie. His contemporary John Gielgud made no excuses that he enjoyed acting in such movies as Arthur, and was quite unashamed about admitting that he did it for the money.

We share Disney and in particularly Pinocchio as early childhood viewing and I believe Dick said that it was his first, or close to first ever movie. Yes, I did forget the pantomimes and I did see maybe one at the Tivoli but I do remember seeing at least one or two at Wirth's Circus, who used to set up each year near where the Art Gallery is now, if I remember correctly. We do get to see a few movies or we did last year, but this year we have not done so well.

We have missed a few I wanted to see such as the animated SF epic *Titan* and we will be away when it is on at the Astor. However we did catch up with others we missed in the city and I will cover them all in this issue of RB or the next. With 'Seniors' Week' coming up next week, we hope to catch up with a few more - three days only, at \$1 each for seniors, so we will see as many as our time and eyesight will allow.

Thanks Noel! I am sure that we will share a lot more yet about our movie going memories and I look forward to receiving more missives from you.

From DICK JENSSEN, P.O. Box 432, Carnegie, VIC 3163, Australia

There was a lot in this issue of TRB. Since we often discuss movies (in a reasonably heated manner) I was expecting to disagree with you on almost everything you say, but, surprisingly, ended up in accord with you on many films.

As you did, I quite liked Mission to Mars, and felt that the critics had been unreasonably harsh. It is by no means a "great" film, but it did provide a couple of hours' entertainment of higher quality than many more hyped-up movies. I particularly liked some of the visual effects - in particular the race to catch the escape pod high above Mars. This sequence captured, for me, that sense of wonder which lured me to SF in the first place.

And the critics were so wrong about Gladiator, which I think must be one of the worst "good" films of the last few years - or perhaps last 25 years. In fact, It's probably near the bottom of the list, on an absolute scale, of any film of the last 10 years. There were some goodies in it - the photography, the CGI sets, Oliver Reed - but... I don't expect historic verisimilitude from Hollywood, but if they have as a chief character a well-known and much-researched figure - who is also a major player in the history of the time (and for at least the following century), then I do expect SOME adherence to the truth. I'm referring to Commodus. He was nineteen when Aurelius died - and he had been co-ruler with his father for the previous year. He ruled for fifteen years. And while he DID fight in the arena, against hobbled opposition, he had not just the one exercise there but about 700. There was NO Maximus, NO short reign, NO murder of Aurelius, NO arena-death. But while that's annoying, it was nowhere near as aggravating as the crude directorial attempts at audience manipulation. I refer to the idyllic scenes, heavenly reunions, forgiving enemies, instant idolisation by the mob, unbelievable survival against overwhelming odds, etc. And the most nauseating feature of the film was Hans Zimmer's music. Bad enough that he thinks battle scenes must feature rip-offs of Gustav Holst's "Mars" from "The Planets", but the wailing which overpowered the soundtrack every so often when "bad" things happened was just unforgivable. If he had deliberately taken the most whining, whingeing, self-pitying dirges from Irish Folk singers, and then applied some kind of anencephalic dumbing-down, he couldn't have done a better job. It was appalling. But the Academy

voters disagree with me. Which means that either I'm terribly wrong or they like "big" movies. Well...there was Titanic a few years ago...

I liked Pitch Black very much - so much so that I'm prepared to forgive the unscientific image of a planet with two rings, one of which has a centre which does not coincide with the centre of the planet.

And - this is terrible, I'm agreeing with you again - Topsy-Turvy was one of the better films of the past year. I'm not a fan of Gilbert and Sullivan, but after this film, I think I might listen to them more often. I wonder why, though, the film makers thought to ignore Sullivan's homosexuality...

And then we also agree on The Iron Giant, Gattaca, Stuart Little, X-Men, The Perfect Storm, and Frequency. A concordance which worries me somewhat - for if it continues, what will we find to argue about ?

AHA! At last something to disagree over. And a point on which I'm positive you are definitely wrong. (Though Ambrose Bierce did define "positive" as "being wrong at the top of one's voice".) 2001: A Space Odyssey was released as a Cinerama film, and the only theatre in Melbourne which could show Cinerama was the Plaza. And the MSFC visit was to the Plaza theatre. We occupied almost a complete row about a dozen rows from the screen (if I remember correctly to be at the centre of curvature of the screen). The film showed there for quite a few months. Perhaps, some time later, it moved to the Metro in Collins Street...

A plea to end with. The next time you write up movies, I beg you - don't discuss films we agree on. It's too depressing.

Dick

Questionable honour for film

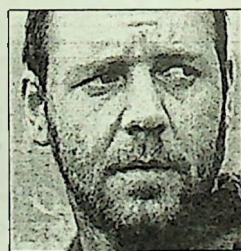
GLADIATOR has won another accolade — this time for having more mistakes than any film nominated for an Oscar this year.

The website movie-mistakes.com lists 124 flaws, ranging from historical inaccuracies to continuity errors.

Trained eyes have picked out a jet trail in the sky, tractor marks on a field and weapons that had not yet been invented.

In one scene after a battle, Russell Crowe feeds a horse a piece of apple. "If you look closely between Maximus and the horse, there is a crewman wearing a pair of blue jeans," the website says.

In the coliseum scenes, mistakes include another crewman in the crowd wearing a shirt and jeans



Russell Crowe

standing next to a camera.

"In the battle with the barbarian horde one of the chariots is turned over," the site says.

"Once the dust settles you can see a gas cylinder in the back of the chariot."

The 1997 epic *Titanic* tops the movie mishaps list with 203 goofs. *Matrix* comes in second with 152.

Well, Dick, I am sorry that you did not like *GLADIATOR*, but as a student of Roman history I can understand your criticism of the historical details. However it is only a story. Would you be as critical about the true story in the numerous western movies about Wyatt Earp and friends? I must listen to the soundtrack music again, as I did not take much notice of it while watching the film, but it must have done its job with me, catching the mood of the various scenes, otherwise it would have annoyed me. But I think that you will agree with me that it is at least visually great. Helena and I thought you might enjoy the article (from the Melbourne Herald-Sun 14th April 2001) highlighting some of *Gladiator's* anachronisms, though failing to mention the blatant violation of historical facts that you have pointed out in your letter.

We have in the past often disagreed on movies such as *Last Year At Marienbad* or the French *Lemmy Caution* movie for instance, but I am pleased that we do agree on the films you mentioned - particularly *Gattaca*, which I think is a really bad film for numerous reasons. OK, you must be correct about *2001: Space Odyssey*, but I know that I have seen it at other times not in Cinerama, but when and how is an example of my creative memory, which I have become aware of while writing my memories of the Melbourne SF Club. Wait till I write up all the old films I have seen, including the SF and otherwise, then you will no doubt find many to disagree with me on. Meanwhile the ones you mentioned in your letter to Michael Waite as the Best SF movies do surprise me. Obviously your association with computers over the years has coloured your judgement regarding *Colossus*, *the Forbin Project*, which I remember I enjoyed and I wanted to read the following books on which it was based, but never had them in stock long enough to get to them. However I did not think the movie was all *that* good, but I will reserve judgement till I see it again. I cannot comment on the later version of *The Fly* as I did not particularly like the first one. I usually avoid remakes (the classic, and most hated SF movie of mine being the remake of *The Thing*, Rob Bottin's alien "things" were ludicrous to say the least, and I have not liked his work in later movies either) and I never felt inclined to watch the second. Your assessment of Cronenberg's *The Fly* as a love story, in that even if her man has become half fly she still loves him, is somewhat intriguing, and if you put it on at Race's I might actually watch it. Yes, *TWELVE MONKEYS* was good and probably the best time travel SF movie, possibly in my top ten, but I am still very fond of the George Pal production of H.G.Well's *The Time Machine* starring Rod Taylor. As for *The Power*, again I did enjoy it the first time around, but I saw it again at cons or on TV later and all I can say is, I was not so impressed. I could go on, but I will discuss all my likes and dislikes in movies in later issues of RB.

Another shock for you! We both liked *SPHERE*.

From MICHAEL W. WAITE, 105 West Ainsworth,
Ypsilanti, MI 48197-5336USA.email:sosadmin@tir.com

Dear Merv,

Congratulations are in order for you, Bill, and Dick "Ditmar" Jessen for being nominated for a Ditmar. (Hey, isn't that a conflict of interest for Mr. Jessen.) I assume Bruce Gillespie was also nominated for an award? CONGRATULATIONS! to one and all.

I, too, am a movie nut aficionado. The September 2000 issue of The Rubbish Binn(ns) is a beauty. Seldom do you see such an extraordinary meshing of "real" content and graphics. I'm impressed. You and Helena (and Dick) have outdone yourselves with this issue. The only thing missing is a pair of passes to my local cinema!

The first movie I can remember seeing was Phantom of the Opera -- the 1943 version starring Claude Rains, Nelson Eddy, and Susanna Foster. It takes a lot to scare me but, at age 8, that movie gave me nightmares. At age 15, The Thing: from another world (1951) starring James Arness and Kenneth Tobey, also gave me nightmares. At age 43, I found out that I could still be scared out of my wits, when I saw Alien (1979), starring Sigourney Weaver. That movie still scares me after 5 viewings. No movie has scared me in the last 20+ years.

"Movies and TV in Review" and "Personal Movie Memoirs" brought back some personal memories of my own. The first movie I ever saw, but DON'T remember, was Gone With the Wind. My mother took me to the Ann Arbor, Michigan premiere in 1939 or '40. She tells me I was very quiet during the entire film. I was 3 years old at the time.

Your list of movies is impressive BUT there is one glaring omission: Contact (1997). I consider Contact one of the best movies ever made. It's a thinking person's movie. Did you exclude it for any particular reason? Perhaps you talked about it in a previous issue. It definitely asks more questions than it answers. I highly recommend the novel, too. Carl Sagan is my kind of writer; a thinking writer, not afraid to tackle controversial issues.

Movies you spoke about that I intend to see but haven't worked them into my busy schedule, YET -- Bicentennial Man, Space Cowboys, Pitch Black, Allegro Non Troppo, Topsy-Turvy, Stuart Little, Medusa's Child, L5, The Dish, Gladiator, Galaxy Quest (I bought the DVD but I haven't watched it yet!), and the Gormenghast trilogy.

I don't believe the Gormenghast trilogy has hit the US. Where did Dick buy the DVD? I checked Amazon.com but couldn't find it. I almost bought the new biography Vast Alchemies: The Life and Work of Mervyn Peake by G. Peter Winnington (Peter Owen Publishers, with a forward by Michael Moorcock, 2000). The book is poorly bound and sells for the rather inflated price of US\$39.95.

[News Flash! I just ordered the above book from "Bookfinder.com" for US\$17.69. The descriptor says: "Publisher: Peter Owen 2000. First.; Hard Cover, 263 pp; Fine condition. With dust jacket. As New, Unread." I suspect it is a review copy. It comes from a bookseller in Kent, United Kingdom.]

The Iron Giant – I was pleasantly surprised when I "accidentally" tuned in *The Iron Giant* one Sunday morning. I loved the movie and have, thus far, watched it three times! I have a first edition of Ted Hughes' *The Iron Man* (Faber & Faber, 1968) that I read several years ago, to much delight. I have not read the sequel, *The Iron Woman*. It's hard to believe Ted Hughes died over 2 years ago. You stated "...Britain's Astronomer Royal, Ted Hughes." I don't believe Ted Hughes ever held the post of British Astronomer Royal. He was England's poet laureate (and the ex-husband of Sylvia Plath). [I am currently reading *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*.]

Metropolis – This is one of the 4 greatest science fiction movies ever made. The other three are *Things to Come*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *Contact*. At least that's the way I see it.

The Green Mile – I'm not a great Stephen King fan but I liked *The Green Mile*, as well as *Stand By Me*, *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Carrie*. [Oops! I guess that makes me a "partial" Stephen King fan.]

Bladerunner – I have both versions of this movie – the original version and the director's cut (without voice over). I prefer the original release.

2001: A Space Odyssey – A classic. The first time I saw it, I was bored to tears. The second time I saw it, I started to understand some of the symbolism. The third time I watched it, I almost liked it enough to buy it.

Matrix – Pure enjoyment. There are some awesome "moves" in that movie. Of course all the recent action films are copying its success.

Battlefield Earth – Your review is right-on. I thought the movie was a lot of crap but I did enjoy it. Take it for what it is, a bad movie with a satisfactory entertainment value. *Starship Troopers* – This movie is great fun. I liked it enough to buy the video.

Mission to Mars -- I enjoyed it even though most of the critics didn't care for it. Great special effects.

Gattaca -- I liked everything about this movie. As the promo said, "Futuristic story of a genetically imperfect man and his seemingly unobtainable goal to travel in space." That's enough plot for me. I have a copy of the video. Obviously, you didn't care for the movie. I admit I may be a bit prejudiced because I'm in love with Uma Thurman but, alas, she married her *Gattaca* co-star Ethan Hawke. I am still hopeful, Hollywood marriages seldom last, I may still have a chance to win her hand in marriage.

Damon Dark and *Space Island One* – These series are unfamiliar to me. I hope they are nothing like *Space 1999*. I always felt that the talents of Martin Landau and Barbara Bain were wasted on that series. *Space 1999* has to be one of the most implausible series ever made.

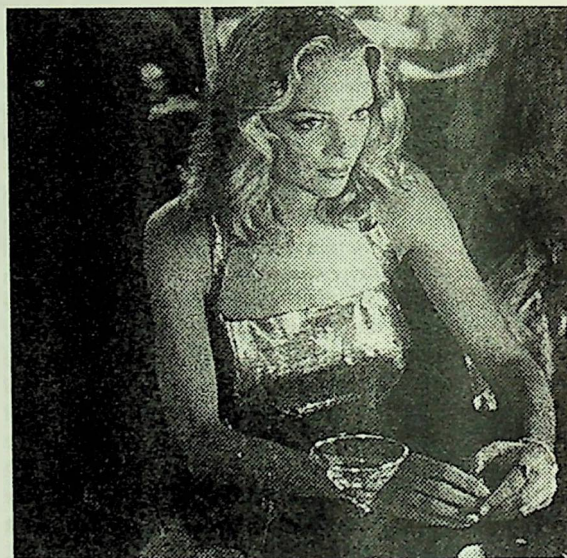
I agree with the last statement in your fanzine, "Yes, movies and music have been a big part of my life, but I know I am not alone!" When are you going to write about the books and cats in your life? You do have cats in your life, don't you? Bookstores are notorious for having a resident cat.

I would also be interested in reading (and comparing) your personal radio memoirs. Listening to the radio was my life in the '40's and '50's, as well as short-wave radio listening. I wonder if Australians and Americans listened to the same radio programs?

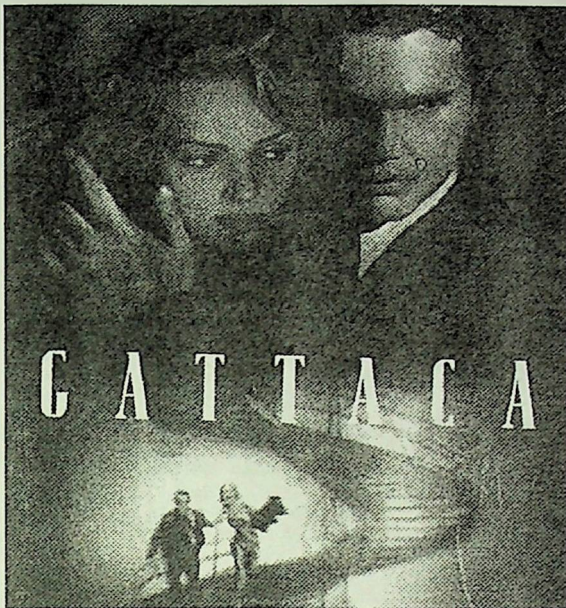
I'm looking forward to the BC edition of *The Rubbish Binn*(ns). [BC, of course, stands for *Before Christmas*.]

Pax,

Michael



Thanks Michael for your letter and comments on RB#8. First up, I intended the movie memories bit to cover the theatres and not so much the shows in the first part, but my next missive will be about the movies and the stars and I will probably cover the SF movies separately. I have seen four different movie versions of *The Phantom of the Opera*, including the silent one starring Lon Chaney, the Claude Rains, an English made one starring Herbert Lom and one made in Southern Europe that I saw on TV, but featuring Jane Seymour. Vincent Price's *House of Wax* I think may be said to be based on it, having a similar theme of revenge. Not to forget Paul Williams' *Phantom of the Paradise*. My favourite of the early horror movies though has to be *The Bride of Frankenstein*, which is better than the original Frankenstein movie, with better special effects and sets and simply a better production all round.



You have really started me off, haven't you, but I will desist and save it all for my next Movie Memoirs column. I have always thought that I saw *Gone With the Wind* on its first release, but that would have made me six or seven at the time. Ok, I probably did. I read my first SF tale when I was six, I estimate, and my mother did take me to a lot of movies. *Snow White* and *Pinocchio* are firmly established in my mind as at least two of the earliest movies I saw and that I can distinctly remember that I saw when very young. I will cover all the great movies, including the SF in due course but meanwhile we both wholeheartedly agree with you on *Contact*, which was so much better than reading the book by Carl Sagan, mostly I guess because of the "SF" ending, which he did not know how to handle.

You will get a lot of enjoyment from some of the movies on recent release, if not all. You seem to agree with us on most including the classics like *Things To Come*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *Metropolis*, but our main bone of contention seems to be *Gattaca*.

Helena and I do not always agree on movies, but we do on that stinker and so does Dick. I guess it is what you see and how you personally interpret it. I do not particularly like Uma Thurman but I have liked her in other movies and I will admit that liking or not liking a particular actor can put me off even seeing some movies. For instance I can't stand Jack Nicholson, but I must admit that he is a great actor and has played a number of roles that simply were him, right down to the ground. But it was not the actors that put us off *Gattaca*. The sets and filming may have been clever in a surreal or even, in artistic terms, naïve style, but I hated it and the story was so silly and implausible that I have to add it to my list of worst movies ever seen. But then I hated *Pulp Fiction*, which the critics tell us it is great and it gained a number of awards. Ah well, we can't all like the same things, I guess.

When it comes to radio here, when I was young we had serials of *The Phantom*, *The Shadow* and *Superman* but all were produced in Australia. There were a lot of other purely Australian serials that became classics such as *Dad and Dave*, *Martin's Corner*, *Blue Hills* plus historical epics set in the early days of colonization of Australia. I remember a very good version of Wilke Collins' *The Moonstone*, with a theme based on one of the Russian composers, Borodin perhaps. But the one that sticks in my mind was based on a 1930s Australian SF novel, *Out of the Silence* by Erle Cox, in which a woman in suspended animation, from some past lost civilization, is dug up and sets out to take over the world. The opening sound effects of a cymbal and swishing sword were very atmospheric. My mother and father and I used to listen to the radio during the evening meal and sometimes after for quiz shows, sport and to a lesser degree music. That is where I heard all the melodies I love, but it took me well into my adulthood to identify them, and I still am. I particularly like the romantic Russian composers such as Tchaikovsky, Rimsky Korsakov, Moussorgsky and Borodin. Sound track music also I love, particularly Williams and Morrocone. The only time I listened to short wave was to try and pick up the cricket broadcasts when the Australians were in England, but our old radiogram - which was still in good condition when I was moving here four years ago and I sold it to one of these dealers who renovate and sell them again - was not too good on the short wave. After 1956 when we got TV, the old radio took a back seat apart from morning wake up for weather and time, but now the TV tells us all. It even looks as if the whole lot - radio, phone, TV and computer - will all be combined in due course.

Well, I will ramble on further also in due course. But there's one more thing in reference to the radio, and *Gattaca*. We listen to a radio program, *The Science Show*, a long-running production of our ABC (our public broadcasting network, not to be confused with your ABC) every Saturday afternoon. Recently it aired a discussion of *Gattaca* and the type of future it portrays, relating it to the negative ethical implications of current trends in genetic research and gene therapy. The featured speaker was genetics specialist Dr W. French Anderson, Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Dr Anderson has been involved as a consultant to *Gattaca* and other films dealing with these issues. He expressed the concern that: "If we start engineering ourselves in the total ignorance that we have of what humanness is, at what point might we totally accidentally, totally unintentionally, totally inadvertently engineer ourselves to the point where we lose whatever it is that makes us uniquely human. We might very well engineer ourselves so that we start looking like *Star Trek* people instead of like human beings."

All the best for now.

Merv

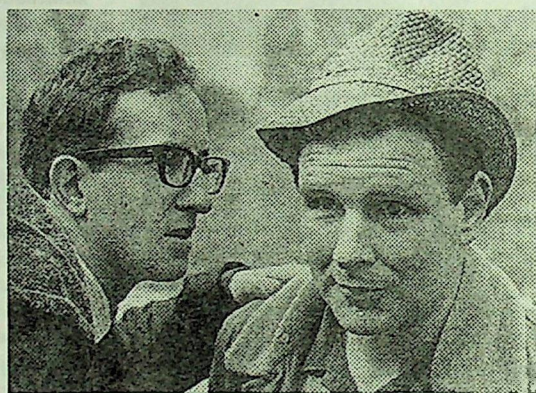
John with MERVYN BARRETT (left) and BOB SMITH (in front) at Merv Barrett's flat in the early '60s.



The Many Faces of FOYSTER



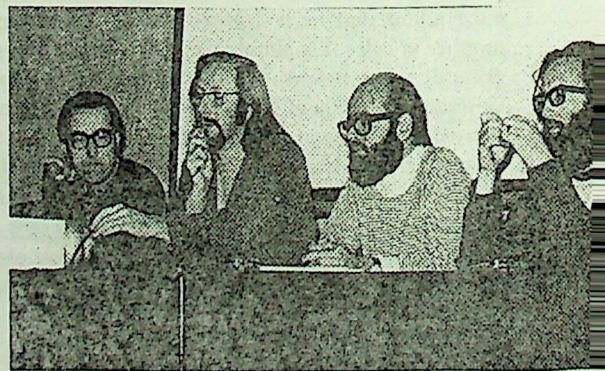
Above, from left CHRIS BENNIE, JILL DUDDING, KEITH McLELLAND, MARGARET DUCE (now Helena Roberts Binns) and JOHN FOYSTER at Margaret's 21st Birthday party, 21st December 1962.



With JOHN BANGSUND in the '60s.

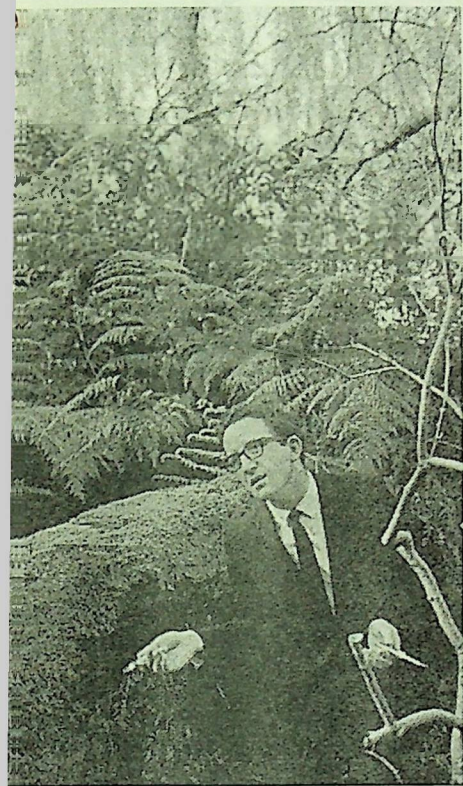
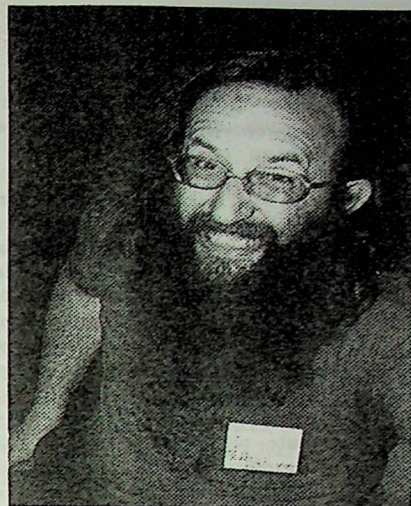
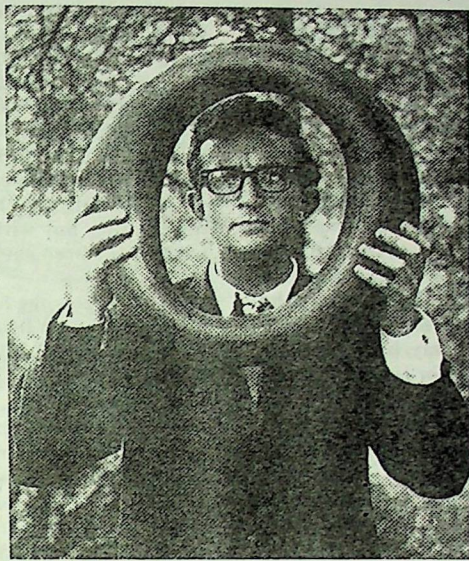
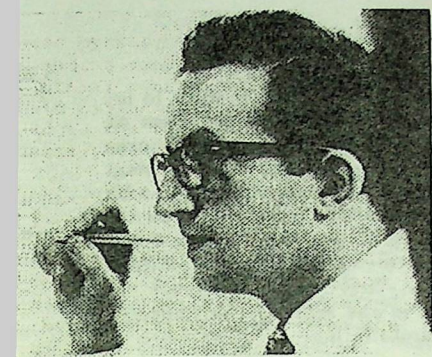


With MIKE GLICKSOHN (Fan GOH) at AUSSIECON 1, Melbourne 1975



Ph
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He

snapshots from *John Foyster's*
Four decades of fandom



THE FAN'S PROGRESS
With youthful idealism *The Man From ANZAPA* seeks enlightenment through the Torus of Truth, and with the twin blades of righteousness battles the forces of darkness in the Forest of Confusion. After decades of disillusionment *The Bearded Sage* seeks solace in worldly dissipation, and ultimately sells his soul for a Dilmir. A sad indictment of the Futility of Fanac!

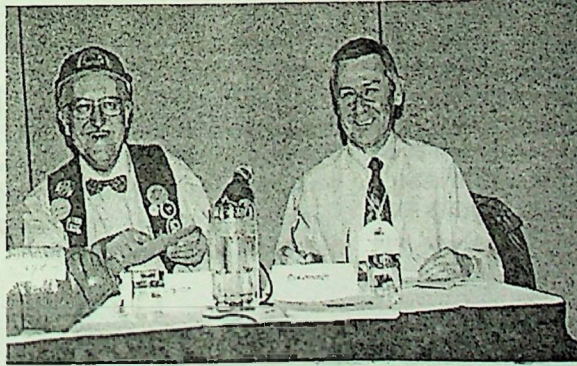


"Bill, you're off!" John umpires the football game at Elizabeth's farm.

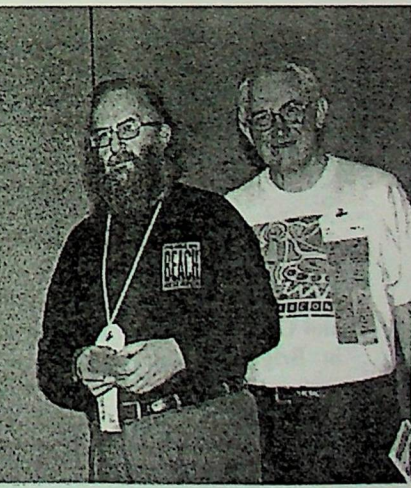
... on these two pages by:
... Barrett, Barbara Duce,
... Harding, Dick Jenssen,
... Gray, Kelvin Roberts,
... Roberts Binns, Merv Binns.



With VALMA BROWN in the fan opera *JOE PHAUST*
at EASTERCON, Melbourne '73



A FANIHISTORICON panel at AUSSIECON 3, Melbourne 1999, from left: MERV BINNS, DICK JENSSSEN,



... WITH JOHN FOYSTER, DON CLAHAM

The Many Faces of Foyster

(see photos previous two pages)

Since over the years I've accumulated a lot of photos of well known Australian SF personalities, I've planned to do a photo spread on one of them every now and then in *The Rubbish Bin(ns)*. Few could be more well known than John Foyster, and since I have quite a few photos of him, I have been intending 'some day' to feature him. When I learned from Yvonne Rousseau that John would be having his 60th birthday in April 2001 (on Friday the 13th, Good Friday, no less!) I realised that this was the obvious time to do it. Some of you may have seen the tribute to John, *festzine - things for john foyster's sexagesimal* that Yvonne, with co-editors Juliette Woods and Damien Warman, produced in honour of John's 60th. It featured articles and photos contributed by fans and authors from all over Australia, and indeed the world, with fond reminiscences of John's four decades in fandom. For those who haven't seen it, the following is a reprint of my contribution:

I first remember JOHN FOYSTER coming into McGills Newsagency when I worked there, it must have been in the late fifties at least, and buying copies of the Melbourne SF Club magazine *Etherline*. Like my memories now about everything else I cannot recall when he started coming to club meetings, but I certainly do remember his great efforts to get Melbourne fandom back on the rails, along with other Melbourne fans, in the 1960s. I was surprised to learn at Aussiecon 3 FanHistoricon Panels that John apparently had been in touch with fans interstate and all over, when I first started seeing him in McGills. This indicates to me perhaps, why he was keen to get the club operating in a better way than it had been, in the early 1960s. He roped in other fans around here then and put on the 7th National Australian SF Convention (not the 6th as I mistakenly said in the version of this printed in *festzine*) in the old clubroom in McGill's store in 1966. And that was not all. He was involved with later conventions in Melbourne, started producing fanzines and I think encouraging other people like John Bangsund and Bruce Gillespie to do the same. John became one of the most active fans in Melbourne for years to come. But the detail on this period I will have to rely on others to write.

I have always found John a levelheaded and easy guy to get on with and always pleased to talk with me about SF, fandom or whatever. When it comes to times that I *can* remember him in particular, I cannot forget his role as Joe Phaust in the play we put on at the 1973 convention in Melbourne, at the Victoria Hotel, his "acting" debut with all of us in the publicity movie we made for Aussiecon One, and the tableau at Seacon in England in 1979, with George Turner and the rest of us. He and I had been talking briefly to Donald Wollheim and C.J.Cherryh at a party in the Prince Regent's folly in Brighton, when we had to race off to get into costumes.

The little incident that somehow has really stuck in my mind, however, was going into the clubroom when we were renting an office in McKillop Street, Melbourne city one day, to find John using the duplicator. Things apparently had not been going smoothly, there was a bit of ink being spread around and it was not all on the stencils or the duplicator's drum. It was on John! Despite his problems he seemed to be taking it all quite philosophically, (though he may remember it differently), but with me in the same circumstances, I would have been raving and ranting.

Then there was the football match at Elizabeth's farm at Kyneton. We all had a great time that day and I have some great photos of him in the thick of it and ordering Bill Wright off the field. There were the parties at Shakespeare Grove, St Kilda and all the other get-togethers and conventions. Bruce Gillespie praised me much too much, to my embarrassment, though I really did appreciate it, at Aussiecon 3, for my efforts in keeping the Melbourne SF Club going in the early years, but I believe that John is responsible as much as anybody, maybe more so, for the growth of Melbourne SF Fandom from the 1960s on and our efforts to run the World Convention in 1975.

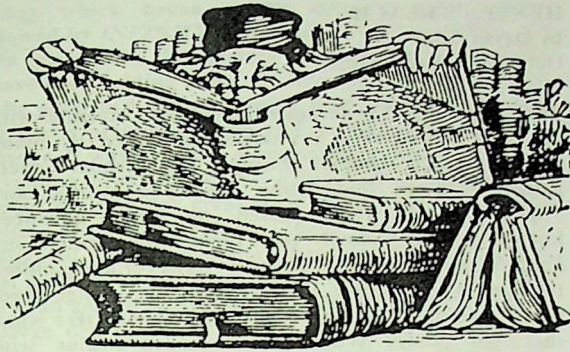
I have enjoyed John's company over the years greatly and I wish him all the best for his 60th birthday and I hope he has many more.

Merv

Well, Merv has left a little space on this page for me to add my congratulations to his. I realise that this will be a bit late for your birthday, John, but Happy Birthday anyhow!

I would also like to add a few personal reminiscences. I first visited the Melbourne Science Fiction Club in January 1958. I had just turned 16, and had come from Alexandra to the city to study art at RMIT. I must have met John soon after that, as I find from the timeline of John's life that Yvonne helpfully included, that John and I share not only the same birth year (1941) but the same first SF convention (the 6th Australian Convention, at Richmond Town Hall, April 1958). I remember John as being affable and good-humoured, though serious-minded. He was always kind and friendly toward me. He became one of my good friends in fandom, along with Chris Bennie and Keith McLelland, seen with Jill Dudding and John and me in the photo on the previous page, taken at my 21st birthday party, on the 21st of December, 1962. (And yes, my 60th, like John's, will naturally be this year.) Like many others, I was amazed by John's legendary collection of SF, and astounded by the extent of his involvement with fandom and his prolific output of publications - especially as he was pursuing a brilliant academic career at the same time! I was somewhat bemused, seeing him only intermittently in later years, to witness his evolution from fresh-faced youth to bushy-bearded 'grey eminence'. But his intelligence and wit are as sharp as ever, and his benign good nature has not changed.

Helena



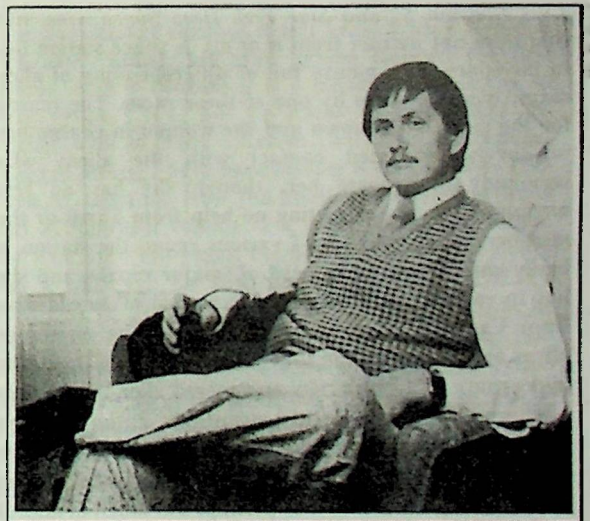
BOOKS I HAVE READ

Despite all the TV and movie going, I have been catching up with more reading recently, although I will probably never read all the books that I have kept that I want to read, let alone Helena's library of books on every imaginable subject.

Over the years I have made an effort to read all the Hugo winning novels, but I have not caught up with them all. Some I have on my shelves though others I have not been able to afford, but I did get hold of Joe Haldeman's *FOREVER PEACE*, as a review copy from Allen and Unwin, which, like its predecessor, *FOREVER WAR*, won both the Hugo and Nebula awards. A further title, *FOREVER FREE*, is on my want list. *Forever Peace* is not a direct sequel to *Forever War*, though it seems that *Forever Free* is.

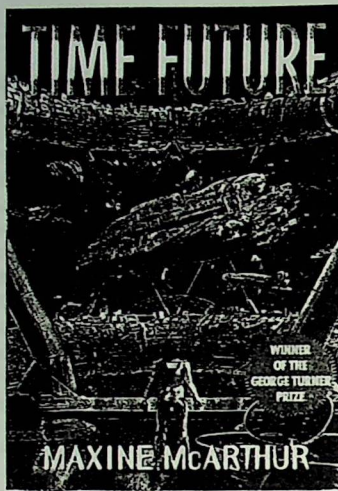
I guess Joe's involvement in the Vietnam war has induced him to write about wars, which he obviously did not get out of his system with his first novel, a non-sf war novel that was published in the early 70s, as besides the afore mentioned titles he has written or edited other books with a war theme. One anthology was of stories relating sf alternatives to war, and all his writing can certainly be classified as anti-war with strong emphasis on the futility of it. While *Forever War* did deal primarily with the futility of it, *Forever Peace* comes up with a radical way of stopping all future conflicts on Earth, but it leaves you wondering if this cure is even worse than the complaint. I did not read *Forever War* again, however I know that I did like it when I read it in the '70s, but I was not so impressed with *Forever Peace*. The protagonists reach their objective in the end, but it leaves you with the strong feeling that their way of stopping all future wars is *not* necessarily the best thing for mankind.

Another Hugo winner was *ENDER'S GAME* by Orson Scott Card, which was published in 1984, featuring a young man named Ender Wiggin, who unwittingly wipes out almost a whole race of alien creatures, as the people running things let him believe he was only playing space war games. In two following books, *Speaker for the Dead* and *Xenocide*, Ender endeavours to atone for the dreadful thing that he was tricked into doing, and in the process not only establishes a super computer mind, with the help of a remaining hive queen of the race he almost totally destroyed, and he travels at relativistic time throughout the universe, seeing the establishment of human colonies over three thousand Earth years. Just when I thought that it was all over, Card brings out another Ender novel titled *CHILDREN OF THE MIND*. People who are created as extensions of Ender's "being" by the super computer mind Jane - who only exists in the net that she has created linking the whole galaxy of human civilization - endeavour to save the planet Lusitania, which is a place where Ender has found some final peace, and Jane from destruction by Earth government. They believe that a virus established on Lusitania, if let loose, will destroy all humanity and that Jane has too much control of human communication. All's well that ends well however and although a bit long winded, it was a satisfying conclusion to the saga and if you have read the earlier books, you must read *Children of the Mind*. But just when I thought it was all over again, a new title, *ENDER'S SHADOW* turns up, which goes right back to the beginning and is the story of another young man, who they called Bean, contemporary with Ender in the Battle School.



An early photo of ORSON SCOTT CARD

In 1998 Random House publishers established a competition for Australian writers of sf&f, which they called THE GEORGE TURNER PRIZE FOR SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY. The first winner was Tansy Rayner Roberts with her humorous fantasy novel, *Splashdance Silver*. This year's



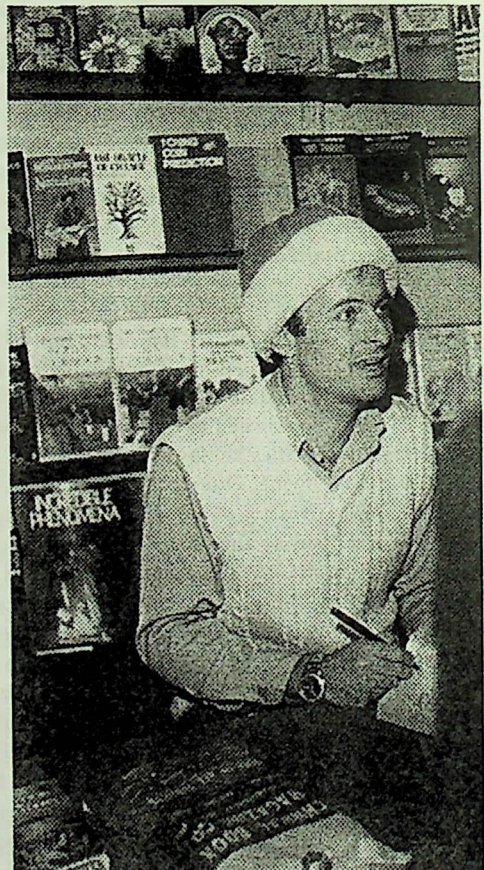
winner is Michelle Marquet for a novel with the working title of *Blue Sky and Silence*, and the prize was presented to the author on the 26th of May in Sydney. At AUSSIECON 3 last year the second year's prize winner, Maxine McArthur, received her prize for *TIME FUTURE*, which I have just read, and I was suitably impressed with this sf thriller. Between them, Random House and Harper Collins have discovered a wealth of writing talent in the sf&f fields in Australia, a large portion of it being female. Sara Douglass for instance by Harper Collins, the above mentioned ladies by Random House and Isobelle Carmody by Penguin, to mention a few. Unfortunately I have not read any of these ladies' books apart from *TIME FUTURE*, partly because most of them are fantasy and I am strictly an sf addict, and partly because of time, but if Maxine's book is any example, let us see many more.

Time Future is a space station tale, which owes a lot to TV's *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek Deep Space Nine*, but that does not detract from it at all. A space station out in far space, in a galaxy full of different types of alien races, is under siege by one of these races. The reason for the siege is unknown and the woman in charge has to survive repeated contact with the aliens who seemingly interrogate her, though she has no real memory of it. She is getting no help from Earth or the members of an alliance of various races, the station is badly run down and in need of major repairs and she has to cope with the mysterious arrival of an old ship from Earth, while trying to deal with the numerous aliens on the station and the murder of one of them. The appearance of a genetically engineered alien monster, as a killing machine, is the last straw. The author conveys the frustration of the woman commander, and the description of the run-down station and the bizarre aliens, with great detail and perhaps too much detail. It seems to take a long time to get to the point, but the commander's frustrating situation is continually dragging on and the author's style only emphasises this, drawing the reader on, desperately wanting to see the mystery resolved. With some reservations about the long-windedness of the writing, I thought that it was great, and a very promising first novel.

HEAVEN'S REACH

by David Brin
Orbit Paperback \$16.95

Back in the nineteen seventies David Brin invented with his book *SUNDIVER* a universe inhabited by many different races, wherein many of the advanced races endeavoured to find lesser developed worlds and "uplift" them. They passed on their advanced knowledge and virtually took them under their wing. Earthlings were a pretty smart lot however and uplifted themselves so to speak, by developing long range space travel, and they ran into these other characters when they got going. When the sequence begins with *SUNDIVER* we find that the humans have uplifted their own, the dolphins, and the crew of the Earth ship featured in the story is composed of both humans and dolphins. Later volumes in the series feature the chimpanzees. While on a mission to "seek new worlds" and such, the ship *Streaker*, discovers a very ancient group of space ships orbiting a small star, which throws the rest of the starfaring races into a tizzy, and *Streaker* becomes their target. After numerous trials and tribulations, they survive but the reason for the whole alien fraternity being so upset is never fully explained.



DAVID BRIN signing books at 'Space Age' during AUSSIECON 2, 1985

(Photo by Merv Binns)

Two other books followed in the series, *STARTIDE RISING* and *THE UPLIFT WAR*, but not until we saw a trilogy which began with *BRIGHTNESS REEF*, followed by *INFINITY'S SHORE* in 1995 and 1996, did Brin get back to the mystery presented in *SUN-DIVER*. I have been holding those two titles waiting for the third to be published so that I could read them all together, but partly because I forgot and partly due to financial reasons, it was not until a paperback edition turned up of volume three, *HEAVEN'S REACH*, that I have finally caught up with this great treat of super science fiction writing. On the face of it the "uplift" system seems to be motivated by high idealistic intentions, but the truth is that most of the avaricious alien races are in it for what they can get out of it, and exploit the races they uplift to a large degree, and do not get on with one another either. So it is most unusual that we find a group of six entirely different races, including humans, living and co-operating wonderfully on a world called *Jijo*. Authorities have deemed that *Jijo* was not to be settled at all and the whole population is continuously concerned that they will be discovered and meet terrible retribution. At the beginning of the trilogy, a spaceship has turned up and as panic sets in, plans to convince the expected presumed authoritative visitors that the *Jijoans* are not the naughty people they seem to be, are set in motion.

The cultures that have developed on *Jijo* have been strongly influenced by the human group who have the full gamut of human knowledge in their library, which the other races have absorbed in the three hundred years since the humans arrived there. The various characters, both human and alien, are wonderfully imagined. The things they have done together are greatly influenced by their efforts to convince the ever expected authorities that they are simple people as a whole and possibly due for uplift and so negate any punishment due for being on *Jijo* at all. However the ships that have landed turn out to carry not whom they expected, but probably even worse, with one group of *Jijoans*, to whom they are related, being their main target as well as *Streaker* which they have been pursuing. As the tale continues, jumping from one group of characters to another, chapter by chapter, we find that *Streaker* is actually hiding at the bottom of a very deep part of *Jijo's* ocean. I enjoyed reading the first two books, getting to know and sort out the multiple characters, waiting for all the people on *Jijo* to turn the tables on their tormentors, and for *Streaker* to get away and pass on the artifacts they have gathered to the authorities, and so end their long and tortuous adventures.

In *HEAVEN'S REACH* the planet is finally left in peace, as all action is transferred to deep space. *Streaker* blasts off with their enemies the *Jophurs* in pursuit, heading towards a red giant star and the jumping point that will hopefully allow them to escape their tormentors once and for all.

Things get very complicated from here on as a much higher form of aliens, with a hydrogen life cycle enter the picture and take control of both *Streaker*, the *Jophur* and thousands of ships carrying millions of other life forms, endeavouring to survive as their fractal habitats are destroyed. Periodically it seems the whole universe gets a bit of a shake up and if you are into cosmology you will lap up all the theories on the existence of the universe that Einstein, Hawking and every other cosmological theoretician has come up with. I have been put off a little in the past by so many good yarns at the end getting lost in the authors attempt to completely bedazzle us with science and the end and the beginning again of everything and 'wow, this story has the biggest and most grandiose bang I have ever read!'. If David Brin set out to describe the most cataclysmic event beyond all others that sf authors have ever written about, he has surely succeeded. The characters find themselves towards the end of the story in the most incredible situations, but it all comes to a logical conclusion, though life in the universe will never quite be the same again. Some to find peace and contentment back home on Earth and others facing adventures beyond belief. In a final denouement even life back on *Jijo* has found peace and tranquility. All in all a most satisfying read that I have no reservations in recommending to all readers.

READING IN PROGRESS

I picked up a copy of the second book in a trilogy by British author Peter Hamilton, back in 1999, and I finally found a copy of the first volume in a second hand shop and started reading it last year. I have found it very heavy going, not even having finished the first volume, mainly because it is a giant of a book, as all three volumes are, but he packs so much into his writing, with so many different characters in so many different places, I have been finding it very hard to keep track of them all. Now the publishers have sent me a copy of the third volume in a small paperback edition and with over 900 pages, the print is so small I doubt that I will ever be able to read it. The *REALITY DYSFUNCTION* is very good and quite original in its ideas and I commend Hamilton for his plan, as he said in a *Locus* interview, to view the range of events through the eyes of the people on the ground as well as just one group of major protagonists, but it is making the story very long-winded, perhaps like reading the whole of the *Babylon 5* TV show's scenario in book form.

Well, as if you did not get enough in the 8th issue of RB, here are some more comments on movies and TV...

MOVIES, TV & OTHER EXPERIENCES From October 2000

What has been on TV? First up, we have been watching episodes of *STAR TREK - VOYAGER* from the 4th season, which I think would have been screened in the USA in 1998. At this rate it will be 2010 before we see all of the rest of the series and *DEEP SPACE NINE* is just as far behind and I guess all we can do is bitch about it, as Channel 9 will do what they will do. I guess ST has all been screened on cable, but who wants to pay their rip-off charges? Nine started screening double episodes of *FARSCAPE* during the Olympic Games because they obviously assumed everybody would be watching the Games on Channel 7 and it was a good time to throw away this science fiction stuff. Channel 10 did the same with *XENA*, which I must admit seemed to be a bit sillier than ever recently, but we love it, as crazy as it is. Both series have disappeared from the screens after the games were over. *SEVEN DAYS* also has disappeared, but that is little loss. *STARGATE* is at least innovative and well-done rubbish and we did want to see it again. It finally made a comeback on channel 7 from November through the Christmas holiday break, when the channels schedule many of the shows that they say do not rate well. *FARSCAPE* was also back on channel 9 around the same time.

The same goes for one of our favourite non-SF shows, the high-rating and award-winning (in the U.S.A.) and surprisingly enough, one of the most intelligently written and sophisticated comedies ever seen on the box, *FRASIER*, which we love. But not very many other viewers it seems are with us on that, judging by 9's cavalier treatment of the show, using it as a non-ratings season stop-gap and a 'filler' when the cricket gets rained out. This is upsetting for regular viewers who miss episodes when they are shown unscheduled, as *Frasier* has a continuing storyline. 9's worst stuff-up with it so far was to show the Millennium New Year's episode before the Thanksgiving and Christmas episodes!

We have managed to dodge all the "kiddy" fantasy stuff like *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* and *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* and the *X-File* ripoffs, but I saw a bit of a Canadian show, *First Wave*, which is produced by Francis Ford Coppola and looked moderately interesting, but we have not bothered watching it. One episode of *The Others* also proved intriguing and I may watch that again. There have been a few other borderline "sci-fi" series screened, none of which I consider worth mentioning. When are we going to see something even half as good as *BABYLON 5* or *STAR TREK*, from the USA?

There is something about British TV SF that is more realistic, if that is the correct way of describing it, than American shows.

The UFO or alien contact series other than *The X-Files*, such as *Roswell*, I found boring and uninteresting cliched crap, but a series originated by BBC Scotland titled *INVASION EARTH*, introduced some interesting ideas, even if the characters and settings were somewhat cliched. Old shows like *A For Andromeda* and *The Quatermass Experiment* come to mind. Made in 1998, yes, it is another UFO-oriented plot, with early indications that our planet is about to become a battleground for warring ETs. Obviously not a big-budget production, the sfx are limited, though spectacular at times, but it did show some promise. However we only saw six episodes and it was off. A call to channel 9 indicated that is all there was of it, but we do not believe that, as it was most definitely incomplete and if the producers sold it uncompleted as it was, they ought to be shot. No, I am sure it is our couldn't-care-less friends at channel 9 screwing us around again. What we saw of it also brought back memories of the 1960s British series *UFO*, the star of which, Ed Bishop, I met and talked to about his career at a Melbourne convention a few years back. Ed also made appearances in such epics as *Battle Beneath the Earth* and *Diamonds Are Forever*. Incidentally I know a lot of the actors who have appeared in SF productions on TV and in movies, have been the guests of media conventions over the years and I have had the pleasure of seeing them and hearing their speeches and interviews. David Prowse and Kenny Baker from *Star Wars*, Paul Darrow and Michael Keating from *Blake's 7*, Claudia Christian from *Babylon 5*, and Robert Llewellyn from *Red Dwarf*, for instance, but I regret I missed all the *Star Trek* visitors, because they were either not in Melbourne, or the costs of attending the commercialised "conventions" were exorbitant. As an unabashed fan of movies in general I think that it is great that we are able to see these people in person, and I say stiff cheese to the people who criticise the organisers of media conventions for this practice.



BABYLON 5 star CLAUDIA CHRISTIANSEN

As a young reader I was given a couple of books relating to the British naval war with the French, late 18th and early 19th century, one of which, if I remember correctly was titled *Mr Midshipman Easy*. I found the idea of great sailing ships at war fascinating, so I also read one or two *HORNBLOWER* books by C.S.Forester and I of course saw the movie with Gregory Peck in the title role. Recently we saw a new BBC series on the ABC, based on the C. S. Forester books, with Hornblower as a midshipman. And if you like this stuff, you will enjoy this series and just seeing the great ships, either as models or some of the copies they have recently constructed, is worth the viewing at any rate. We only saw three episodes but indications are there are more to come next year.

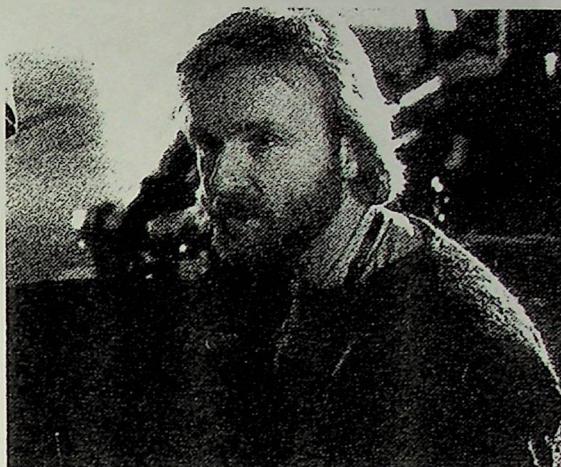
We saw a new TV mini-series version of *On The Beach*. Its length, dragged over two nights, made it even more tedious than the original, though in some ways it was better. At least the Australian characters in it were played by Australian actors. The fact that the male lead was played by a French actor pretending to be an American, and that it had a different ending from the original, made little difference to this boring and depressing story. Why bother to remake it?



Stars FRED ASTAIRE, GREGORY PECK and AVA GARDNER
in *ON THE BEACH*

When I was working for McGills during the filming of the Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner version in the 1950s, Peck and his wife came in to McGills and bought a big pile of children's books from me. Incidentally, one of the scenes in the movie was shot in front of the Melbourne Public Library and we later shot the second-last scene in the Aussiecon One World Con bidding film, the award presentation to Aussie Fan, in front of the Library also.

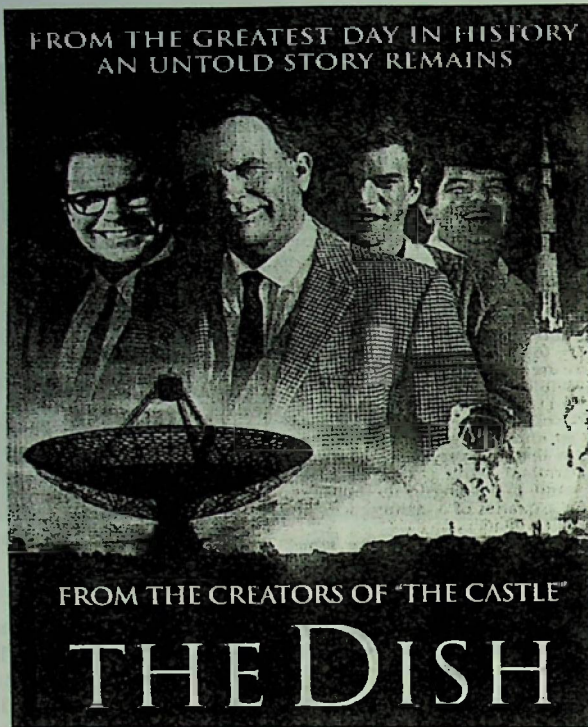
As for movies on the box, we watched *THE RAINMAKER*, based on John Grisham's novel, and if you like courtroom dramas, Grisham really knows his stuff. We recorded *CONTACT* starring Jodie Foster, as this is one of our favourite movies and in my opinion better than Carl Sagan's original novel.



Producer JAMES CAMERON

Movie producer James Cameron is probably best noted for *THE TITANIC*, but watching *THE ABYSS* on TV reminded me that he has done much more, but just as far as sf is concerned he also helped make *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS*, as art director, directed *THE TERMINATOR*, *ALIENS*, *TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY*, as well as *THE ABYSS* and the questionable movie icon *RAMBO*. As for the *ABYSS*, I saw it when it was first released, and I was a bit disappointed in it. There seemed to be something lacking or missing in it, and sure enough it turned out there was quite a lot. According to Maltin the movie was 145 minutes long, but there is a longer version, which is one of what movie people are now calling a 'director's cut' version, and this seems to be what we saw on TV, which with commercials ran for over three hours. The added footage certainly made a difference, and we did enjoy watching it this time. The aliens were a bit over the top, but even so, quite an innovative but logical form for creatures living at the bottom of the ocean.

Both Helena and I have been very interested in space exploration for many years, Helena being a member of the Space Association in Melbourne, so we were very eager to see the new movie, *THE DISH*, starring Sam Neill as the director of the Parkes radio telescope. His three associates are one representative from NASA and two Aussie technicians, played by two of the guys who have been making us laugh in the ABC TV series, *SEACHANGE*, and they were great in their roles. The story is all about the observatory in New South Wales, and its involvement in picking up and relaying the signals from Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins during their trip to and landing on the Moon. It is based on fact, but with a fair bit of licence.



Things are supposed to go wrong in this movie, though they didn't in reality - or so we are told - when they have a power blackout, and as the designated radio telescope in the Southern hemisphere working with NASA, it would be a calamitous and dreadfully embarrassing mess if they don't get back on line in a hurry. Aussie scientific ingenuity sorts things out however and they do pick up and relay the pictures of Armstrong stepping on to the Moon's surface and the rest to NASA and ultimately the whole world. The producers of *The Castle* made a very funny movie there, very shamelessly Aussie, and they have done it again with *The Dish*. It really is very funny, but it brought tears to my eyes remembering my joy and complete rapture, watching the original Moon landing on an old TV set in the old Melbourne SF Club above McGill's store, when I nicked off from selling books in McGill's shop. Utter satisfaction of being able to stick it to the knockers and smart-asses over the years, who knowing I read science fiction and that I believed that man in space was a foregone conclusion, made such inane comments as "...when are you going to the moon Merv". And it gives me great satisfaction in remembering that the blokes at Parkes made seeing it live possible. I am very disappointed that we have not seen men land on the Moon again, apart from the few later Apollo landings, in over thirty years, but at least I do have the satisfaction of having seen the event in my lifetime. Will I get to witness a manned landing on Mars? I think not!

I cannot say that my love of Disney productions in my early years has been maintained. Things like *THE LOVEBUG* and *FLUBBER* somehow did not appeal, and animated versions of classics like *POCAHONTAS*

and *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* put me right off, but the pure animated tales like *THE LION KING* and of course more recently *DINOSAUR* took me right back to my childhood fascination with *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS* and *PINOCCHIO*. We watched Robin William's more recent version of *FLUBBER*, and although it had its moments I would only give it six out of ten at best. Getting back to animation, this new PIXAR system as seen in *Dinosaur* we again experienced when we caught up with *TOY STORY* and *TOY STORY TWO*, both on DVD. Not quite pure kids' stuff, as there are more than a few 'in' jokes and references in them that adults and movie buffs will appreciate, while the animation technique is there to be marveled at. Both were fun, but as with most sequels, I think the first one was the better story, though the effects in the second were more advanced, as you would expect.

Getting away from Disney, I have been wrapped in the British originated *Wallace and Grommit* animated movies that have been screened by the ABC, stop-motion animation at its ultimate best, so I was keen to see the movie that the makers of the *W and G* series were commissioned to make, *CHICKEN RUN*. It was absolutely ridiculous, crazy and quite silly, but it was great fun and Helena and I both enjoyed it immensely. It is a sort of remake of *The Great Escape*, with the chook "prisoners" endeavouring to make their escape from their "prison farm" before they become chicken pies. Mel Gibson does the voice over of the touring circus performing Rocky the Rooster, who drops in to help the hens in their escape and I could see Mel in my mind's eye as I listened to his voice coming from Rocky. It was uncanny. Two "makings of" items seen on TV added to the enjoyment of *Chicken Run*, but the one on the ABC was the best and gave a great view of the intricate art of stop-motion animation.



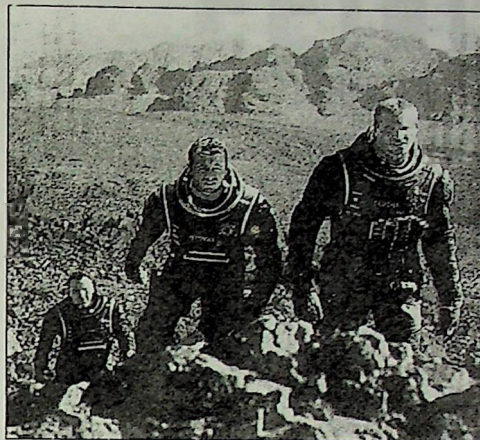
I saw animation of a different sort entirely in *THE CELL*, which one can add to the run of what I might call "cyber" movies like *Dreamscape*, *Tron*, *Johnny Mnemonic*, *The Matrix*, and *What Dreams May Come*. Not all of these are set in cyber-space as such, but all are certainly in the mind, whether computer enhanced or just dreaming, but in the case of *The Cell*, a combination of both. A team of scientists are endeavouring to enter the mind of a young boy who because of the after effects of a brain-affecting disease, is in a catatonic state.



Combine this with an almost *Silence of the Lambs* scenario, wherein they have to enter the mind of a serial killer to find out where he has left his latest victim, after he also becomes catatonic, and you have an exciting plot, with some spectacular special effects seen in the scenes inside the minds of the boy and the psycho. Local critics slammed this movie and in my view they were just too dumb to understand it all. A bit gory, a bit silly (but aren't they all, at any rate!) but definitely entertaining.

There is most definitely a rapidly growing trend towards more fantasy and 'sci fi' in movies and TV and I use that term with its worst connotations. Incidentally I do not entirely object to the term 'sci fi', but I do strongly object to the TV channels and such using the term for everything and anything with an offbeat theme, whether they are horror, occult or witchcraft, and rarely containing any elements of science fiction. A rash of mainly lightweight series on TV are appearing such as the already mentioned *THE OTHERS* on 9 and *FIRST WAVE* and *BEASTMASTER* on 7, the latter being based on the Andre Norton novel of the 1960s. I guess some of this has been brought about by the success of *The X-Files*, *Millenium*, *Buffy*, *Charmed*, *Hercules*, *Xena* and so forth, but no doubt the rapidly developing art of special effects has prompted producers to make shows that can make use of all these innovative techniques. AND are they ever, with prime examples being the many SF movies I have seen recently and to a lesser degree movies like *End of Days*, *The Green Mile* and *The Sixth Sense*. Many more movies are being promoted everyday it seems, with absolutely spectacular visual extravagance. That brings me to other movies seen over the last few months...

THE RED PLANET, like *Mission To Mars*, has some great space vehicle hardware and it all seems very authentic and scientifically correct. Glancing back at the SF movies seen over the last seventy years or so, we have seen some great views of scientific apparatus and gadgets, from *Metropolis*, *Bride of Frankenstein*, *Things to Come* and *Forbidden Planet* to *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Alien*, *2001* and TV's *Babylon 5*, plus all the new wave stuff in recent movies and TV like *Pitch Black*, *Supernova* and *Farscape* to mention a few. *THE RED PLANET* however, like *Mission To Mars*, at least to a large degree, looks as though things could have been built by NASA. The views of the Martian landscape to would-be interplanetary explorers like us are simply breathtaking, but interior views of the giant spaceship are particularly impressive. Most of the recent SF movies have been disaster orientated, with a battle for survival against the odds predominant, with *THE RED PLANET* falling into the same category, but definitely more believable than *Mission To Mars* and other recent movies. Without giving too much away, which I try not to do in my reviews, we only found one somewhat slightly hard to accept concept, and that was the result of efforts to create a breathable atmosphere on the planet and the unexpected consequences.

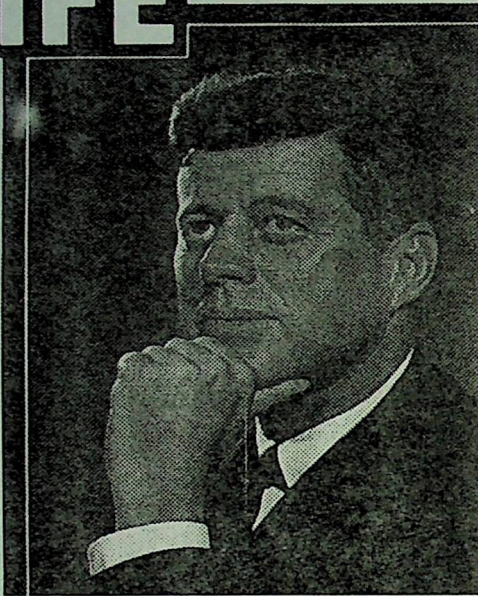


TOM SIZEMORE, SIMON BAKER and VAL KILMER in
THE RED PLANET

When I first looked at promos for Jim Carrey's movies I said I never wanted to watch any of that garbage, he was too over-the-top. *The Mask* or *Ace Ventura - Pet Detective* were not for me. I went to see *The Truman Show*, the Hugo Winning movie for 2000, with some trepidation, and it changed my mind about him. Okay, he does get a bit carried away, like a few other funny men over the years, but he is very clever and I did enjoy *The Mask* despite its silliness, and in *The Truman Show* he gave a more subdued and very good performance. Helena convinced me to go and see *THE GRINCH*, based on the crazy children's tale by Dr Seuss. Well, Carrey was back to his old form, with another extremely over-the-top performance, but it was a very colorful movie with the inevitable ever-growing use of spectacular special effects. We both enjoyed it and I am sure all the other kids that saw it over Christmas would have loved it also.

Then there was Mel Gibson and Helen Hunt's *WHAT WOMEN WANT*. This is a romantic comedy, with some fantasy thrown in, that we thoroughly enjoyed. Mel has come a long way since *Mad Max*, and in no matter what he tackles - historical drama, cops and robbers, westerns and particularly comedy - he excels. In this he plays an advertising consultant who miraculously gains a special insight into what only women are actually thinking. If you enjoyed Mel's zany humour in the *Lethal Weapon* movies, *Maverick* or *Forever Young*, you will love this one.





PRESIDENT
JOHN F.
KENNEDY
—
1977
1983

When I started working for McGills Newsagency in the 1950s, I got into the habit of reading the American editions of *Life* magazine as they came in. I became interested in the presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy, which was very well covered, and later learned that the publisher, Clare Booth Luce, if I remember correctly, was a major Kennedy supporter. I followed the campaign, the election and later the assassination. It's said that everyone who can remember that event can also remember where they were at the time they heard about it, and I can certainly vouch for that. I was working in my father's dahlia nursery, tying and labeling plants, and I had my little radio playing and because I was so wrapped up in and took such an interest in JFK, I was absolutely devastated. But all that is beside the point, which is that my interest in JFK fostered an interest in the American presidential system in general and it encouraged me to read such novels and see such films as *Advise and Consent* and other similar books and movies such as *The Best Man*, from Gore Vidal's play and starring Henry Fonda. Robert Redford's *The Candidate* was good, but other movies of a more throw-away nature such as *Dave* with Kevin Kline, playing a 'double' role with Sigourney Weaver as the First Lady, Michael Douglas and Annette Bening in *The American President* and Harrison Ford in *Air Force One* are movies I enjoyed, partly because of their political background. *Wag the Dog*, with Dustin Hoffman and Robert DiNero, was another we liked, as bitterly ironic as it was. We caught up with John Travolta's *Primary Colours* on the eve of the election, which after a bitter fight in the courts over electoral results in Florida was finally won by George W. Bush even though Vice President Al Gore got more votes nationwide. (A result not unlike that of our own last Federal election!)

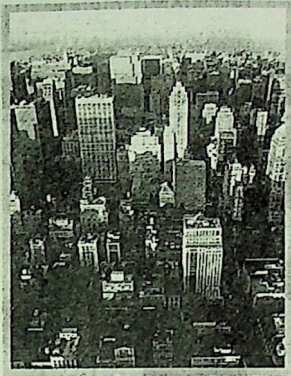
We also caught up with *MY FELLOW AMERICANS* starring Jack Lemmon and James Garner on TV. They carried on the tradition, in a way, that Jack Lemmon enjoyed with the late Walter Matthau in their movies such as *Grumpy Old Men*, with these two old curmudgeon ex-presidents badgering one another. Lemmon and Garner get caught up in a scheme to cover up the indiscretions of the current incumbent, in the story, played by Dan Ackroyd. The dialog was great, a good laugh, but our enjoyment had a lot to do with our interest in the White House goings-on. With the Presidential Election coming up, Channel 7 picked a good time to put it on, even if a little early. Incidentally, neither nominee this time seems to have the charisma that we expect from an American President, which probably accounts for the close race. I had a slight leaning towards Gore, as I do not like some of Bush's ideas, including capital punishment, and I have not been a fan of previous Republican incumbents, especially dear old Ronnie, who perhaps should have remained a movie star, and enough said about Tricky Dicky, but I guess they both had their moments. Nixon of course had the privilege of making the call to Neil Armstrong during the moon landing. (Ironically, the culmination of President Kennedy's commitment to "...put a man on the moon...")

By the way, the date of our most famous horse race, the Melbourne Cup, which is always held on the first Tuesday in November each year, coincides once every four years with that of the U.S. Presidential Elections, also traditionally the first Tuesday in November. Meanwhile we have been watching the new TV series, *THE WEST WING*,



MARTIN SHEEN in *THE WEST WING*

starring Martin Sheen, who incidentally has played US presidents before. This is a very good series and of great interest to us, showing the inner workings of the White House as we have never seen before. I saw the outside of the building on a US trip back in '79, having walked there in pouring rain and I am sorry now that I was not able to do a tour, but no doubt I have seen a lot of it, with Jackie Kennedy's TV tour years ago, lots of movies and the Bill and Hillary Clinton's tour on TV last month. Hillary I am sure wants to get back there herself and having been elected a senator for New York, she is on the way. As for American flag-waving we do enjoy watching *JAG*, despite its somewhat jingoistic attitudes, but it combines adventure with courtroom drama very well and we do appreciate seeing the ships, planes and all, as well as liking the characters. I guess I like watching a lot of things because I like the actors or the characters they play, though the stories may well have little substance.



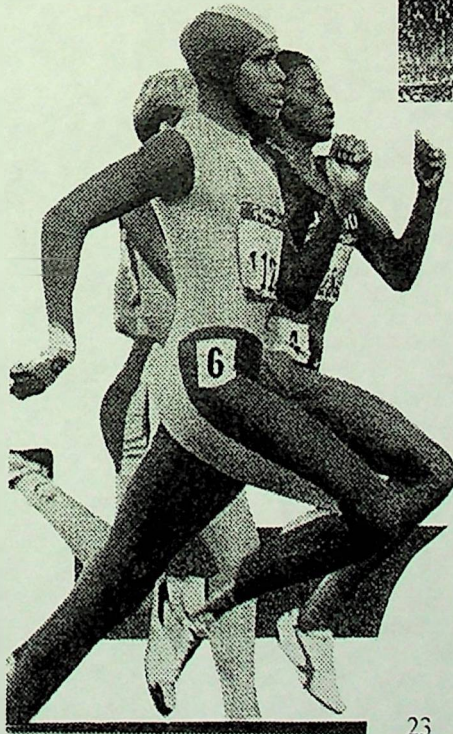
Having been a visitor to New York, visited the Statue of Liberty and seen the city from the top of the Empire State Building, crossed the Brooklyn Bridge to attend a party at the home of SF fan, editor and publisher Andy Porter back in 1973, spent a lot of time just walking and looking, ridden the ferries to Staten Island, travelled on the subway and attended three Broadway musical shows, I was very

interested in a series recently shown on ABC TV on the history of the city - especially the sequence on the building of the Empire State, which was the precursor of all tall buildings built worldwide since. It was a fascinating series as a whole, covering the establishment and growth of the city and the colorful characters that developed it and ran it. If you missed this series, the ABC may run it again on Sunday afternoons and it is worth watching.

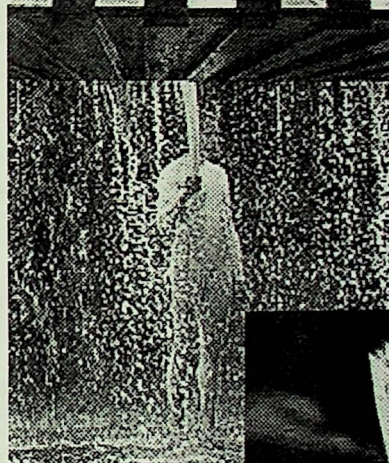
OTHER EXPERIENCES - THE OLYMPICS

It was back in 1956, when the Olympic Games were on in Melbourne, that my family got its first TV set. I never saw any of the events live, but I did see a lot on the box in '56 and I have watched all the later games openings at least, the same way. The opening ceremonies are what I remember mainly, although of course I like seeing our athletes win their events. The ones that stand out are Moscow and Los Angeles and one of the winter games held in France, in which the costuming and the whole display, were very colorful and spectacular, which I was reminded of when we saw the *Cirque du Soleil* on TV.

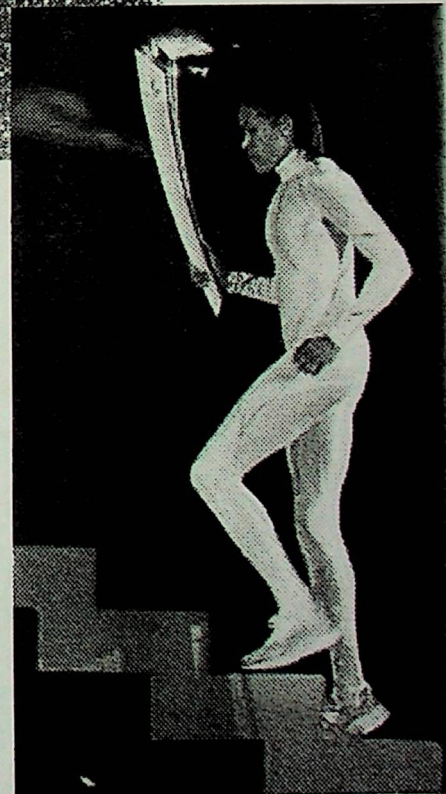
Helena and I watched a lot of the Sydney Olympics events, and the opening and closing were really great and did us proud. Some of the channels other than the official games presenter Channel 7, got better shots of the closing fireworks display, which they showed in their news reports, but over all Channel 7 did a great job.



I was very apprehensive about the opening ceremonies, because in their attempts to make it all very Aussie I thought that it may turn out to be, shall we say, a bit embarrassing - blown up kangaroos on bikes for instance - but although it was *very* Aussie it was great, and not overdone. The lighting of the flame by Cathy Freeman and the performance of thirteen-year-old Nikki Webster in the opening and closing ceremonies, was really spectacular, and her composure during being lifted up to a great height above the arena, indicated that we will be seeing a lot more of this young lady's performances in the future. The



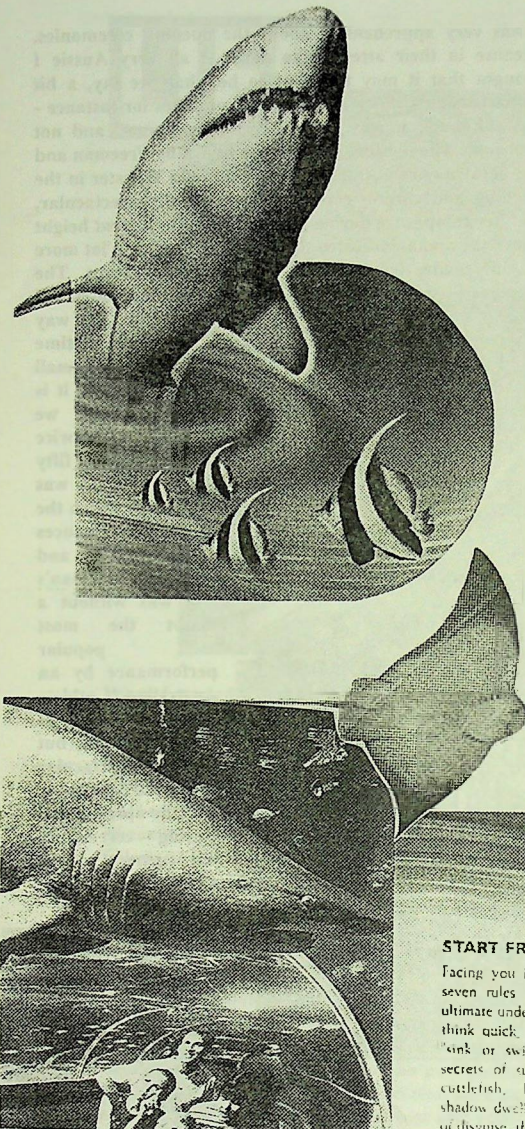
Olympic Games will never come our way again in my lifetime and being the small country we are, it is amazing that we have had them twice in less than fifty years. It was exciting to watch the great performances of our athletes, and Cathy Freeman's win was without a doubt the most popular performance by an Australian athlete ever. I will always remember that, but the spectacular fireworks display and the opening and closing ceremonies in general will always remain in my memory.



THE AQUARIUM

Last but not least, and still on something of a nostalgic trip, I will mention Helena's and my trip to the new Melbourne Aquarium, accompanied by Helena's sister Barbara. My mother was going to take me to the old Melbourne Aquarium when I was about ten years old, but it got burnt down during or soon after the Second World War. I believe the fire started in the building next door, which was used as a dance hall, where many of the American and other troops relaxed when on leave during the war. For nearly sixty years I have been waiting for them to build a new aquarium. Finally my long wait is ended and it was definitely worthwhile. Much more spectacular I am sure than the old one, with the giant viewing tanks, showing fishes of many varieties, including tropical and even corals and sea anemones and other reef-dwellers, and big sharks and rays cruising around. If you live in or visit Melbourne, this is definitely worth a look see. It was great to see some of the sorts of fish I liked to catch and eat, actually swimming around and endeavour to identify them, and there is even a computer program set up for you to operate and identify any fish you see swimming in the great circular display. No doubt there are similar and perhaps even larger such establishments both in Australia and in the USA in particular, but it is great that Melbourne now has its own.

Merv B



A Journey into

subspace

START FROM THE GROUND

Facing you is the first challenge. Learn the seven rules of survival if you dare. In this ultimate underwater experience be prepared to think quick, watch your back and deal with 'sink or swim' situations. You'll discover secrets of survival from some curious cuttlefish, bump into mysterious shadow dwellers and meet the master of disguise, the Leaf Seadragon.

GOING UP - Level 1 HABITATS AND FISH WORKS

Are you as fit as a fish? Find out in Fish Works by City West Water. This is where you come up for air and a quick cappuccino among the billabong and mangrove swamps. But stay alert! Everything is hands on up here.

GOING DOWN - CORAL ATOLL AND SEA JELLIES

Travel deeper and see the brilliant floor to ceiling coral atoll and discover our majestic sea jellies in the Tarro's Exhibition Gallery.

GOING DEEPER - THE OCEANARIUM

Now your final descent begins. The gateway to ocean challenge begins here and there is no turning back. Sharks rule OK. Expect to see lots of teeth. Sharp, pointy teeth. But hang in there.

The Oceanarium is a vast world for fish where divers drift through shark-infested water. It will take your breath away.

ROCKET TO THE SURFACE

Top of our wiggly into subspace with our high energy 'realer than real' simulator ride. You'll take a virtual plunge into the deep and get a fish-eye view of life downunder.

