

SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

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ON THE SCREEN

(From Spencer Strong)

Warner Bros. are making *Toward the Unknown*, and 20th Century-Fox *On the Threshold of Space*, both semi-documentary in character. The latter film, introducing space medicine to the screen, will be the last screen appearance of the late John Hodlak, who died of a heart attack during production. Dr. Heinz Haber is a science consultant for Disney on *A Trip to Mars* and *Our Friend the Atom*. Warner's *Animal World* features dinosaurs reported to be some of animator Harryhausen's best work.

Jack Finney's novel "*The Body Snatchers*" has been filmed — completed some time ago, but since withheld for unspecified alterations. Title is now *The Came from Another World*. Original, ed:

Monster-designer Paul Blaisdell is working on *The Fiend from Outer Space* and *It Stalks by Night . . .* Corinthia Productions are making *Steerd in the Sky*, in which an uncontrolled atomic missile is loose overhead . . . Verne's "*From the Earth to the Moon*" is announced for filming in France.

MAGAZINES

No serial will immediately follow Wilson Tucker's "*The Time Masters*" in *New Worlds*: instead, for several issues long novelettes will be featured by E. C. Tubb, James White and John Brunner. The next serial will be a two-part short novel by J. T. McIntosh — "A particularly fine short novel," says Editor John Carnell, "which has not been published anywhere else owing to its awkward length." Tucker has written a sequel, "*Time Bomb*," already published in the U.S.A., but it is impossible to say yet whether it will run in *New Worlds* later on.



Shown here: Issues 5 (January, 1956) and 6 (February) of Australia's *Science Fiction Monthly*; two new British Nova novels, "*The Dreaming Jewels*", by Theodore Sturgeon and "*Jack of Eagles*", by James Blish. Nova's further plans are unfixed.

Fourth in Atlas Publications of Melbourne's Science Fiction Library series of paperbacks is "*Worlds in Balance*", which includes "*Hidden Worlds*"; two novelettes by American writer F. L. Wallace. A big improvement over the first three, if only in being new to Australia.

"Time and Again" is only incidentally about time travel. It is mainly about an interstellar age, whose cultures are unified in a dangerous stasis of human hegemony. Besides non-humans there are pseudo-humans, androids who aspire to equality and robots who know they cannot. A situation like that has figured in science fiction stories before, but this time there has been some thought about the ethics of it. The action of the book arises from a discovery that must change the situation radically. From Heinemann, 10/6.

The firm of Ward, Lock are producing a series of "Modern Novels of Science and Imagination," having as its advisory editor Lance Sieveking, who wrote "Stampede" and "The Ultimate Island" some thirty years ago. Sieveking himself appears with "A Private Volcano." Jonathan Burke has "Pursuit Through Time." Others are "A World of Difference" by Robert Conquest and "When the Moon Died" by Richard Savage.

"G.O.G. 666" by John Taine (Rich & Cowan, 9/6) is the second Taine novel from this firm, and, incidentally second published in Britain. Like "Seeds of Life" and most of Taine, it has a biological theme, the initials standing for "General Order of Genetics." 23 years separate the two books, this one having first appeared in 1954 (Fantasy Press).

The British edition of *Galaxy Science Fiction* started with the second anniversary issue instead of the first: one of the most serious consequences of this was that the British public missed "Gravy Planet," a serial by Federik Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth, a novel about a world of wastefully overproductive industry. It's a grim, terrifying future because it's all too truly possible. The world is overpopulated and over-exploited so far that cities are built on plies in the ocean for want of land, and vagrants pay rent for the fire escapes they sleep on. Everything costs money, even breathing (you need smog filters in the streets in a built-up area), bribery is normal and officially organised, and advertising, the dominant aristocratic activity, is all-pervading and overwhelming. Resources are used up to the point where food is mainly yeast, algae and synthetics. Oak is a precious material for jewellery, fuel is so expensive that even millionaires' cars are pedal-rickshaws. There is a nominal chamber of commerce government, but no public services, industry having taken over police, mails, utilities and you name it. But it's not grim reading. Pohl and Kornbluth tell the story of how this huckster's paradise responded to the challenge of interplanetary expansion with pointed and not at all good-natured satire that is a joy to read. And now you can read it as "The Space Merchants," published by Heinemann (10/6).

If you enjoyed Paul Capon's previous books ("The Other Side of the Sun," etc.), take a look at "The Wonderbolt." Written mainly as a cloak and dagger thriller, it has a thin plot from the older science fiction, revolving around one of those extra-terrestrial objects of remarkable powers which were popular a generation ago.

"Burn, Witch, Burn" by A. Merritt (Neville Spearman, 11/6) is one of the later Merritt novels, modern metropolitan magic and mystery in the Sax Rohmer manner, quite unlike the earlier fantastic adventure with lost races. A film based on this one was made about twenty years ago, called *The Devil Doll*, and a paper covered edition was printed in England at the time. Otherwise we believe there have been no other British editions of Merritt, which is a pity. His earlier novels contributed something to science fiction — particularly influencing other writers like Jack Williamson — and they would stand reprinting. In America they reappeared in numerous pocketbook and magazine printings and reprintings, enjoying a popularity in the E. E. Smith class. Yet only this one minor novel has appeared on the British scene. Why? Why "Burn, Witch, Burn," which is enjoyable, but not really exceptional, instead of "The Moon Pool," for many years one of the two or three most popular stories in the field and one of the most often demanded reprints? Why not "Dwellers in the Mirage," a splendid lost-race fantasy? Why not "The Metal Monster" (alternatively called "The Metal Emperor"), which has apparently never been in hard covers at all?

Australian readers should note that the book "Journey Into Space" by Charles Chilton is *not* the story of the radio serial "Journey Into Space" which is running at present on some stations, but is based on an earlier BBC serial about a Moon expedition. There is a book version of the serial we know as "Journey Into Space" due shortly, but it's called "The Red Planet." (Herbert Jenkins, 9/6.)

Ace Books of New York started to make their mark in the science fiction field last year with the striking innovation of the Ace Double Book — two books bound back to back in a compact pocket edition with two front covers. More recently they have also done conventional single books as well. But there's more to it than the novelty, for a good selection of titles has appeared. Editor Donald A. Wollheim, a leading fan before the war and with wide experience of SF, reports: "We are keeping pretty closely to a monthly schedule of releases in

(Continued on page 4)

BOOKS

Admirers of Dr. E. E. Smith will be delighted to hear that "First Lensman" is on the way from Boardman (9:6). This is a novel written after the completion of the Lensman series to bridge the historical gap between "Triplanetary" and "Galactic Patrol." To bring new readers up to date, Smith wrote "Triplanetary" in the early 'thirties; scheduled for Astounding (which actually used a cover illustrating it, we believe — March, 1933) and returned when the original publishers, Clayton Corporation, went out of business, it finally appeared in Amazing Stories as a serial (Jan.-Apr., 1934). Smith made a new start, avoiding some of the faults of his original "Skylark" novels, which had introduced interstellar flight to science fiction: in "Triplanetary" the action begins on an interplanetary scale, a first interstellar contact and conflict provides most of the action, and finally faster-than-light travel is achieved by Smith's important concept of an inertia-free state of matter — the first suggestion of a loophole in the Limiting Velocity and the precursor of today's assumed "overdrive."

"Galactic Patrol" (Astounding, September, 1937-February, 1938) begins at a much later time, when interstellar travel is commonplace, contacts have been made with numerous non-human cultures, and a huge Galactic Patrol organization is keeping the peace against organized opposition. From the recognition that the "pirates" they are fighting are part of a definite movement in opposition to "Civilisation" as a whole, through successive campaigns as the nature and scope of the enemy is discovered and its influence is attacked, a connected story continues through "Grey Lensman," "Second Stage Lensman" and "Children of the Lens." Although decried by some as mere extension of primitive adventure fiction into cosmic dimensions, the series is, in fact, carefully thought out and developed with a wealth of detail, and has much to recommend it.

"First Lensman" fills in much background information on the early period of interstellar expansion, the variety of possible intelligent life forms, and the formation of the Patrol. The most straightforward novel in the series, it is also in many ways the most interesting.

You may have had the frustrating experience of reading the first part of "The Escape" in *Space Science Fiction* some time ago, a two-part serial by Poul Anderson which began in what proved to be the final issue. Now you can read this excellent novel complete as "Brain Wave" (Hellemnann, 10:6). It has that rarity, a genuinely new basic idea never before used, and Anderson does it justice. Briefly, it is postulated that for geological ages the Solar system has been in a region of the Galaxy where a natural force field has a slight

retarding effect on electric currents. Earth moving out of the area into normal space, there is a sudden change as nervous systems — evolved to work under a handicap — gain in efficiency. Normal IQ trebles, mental defectives become competent, and animals begin cogitating. Anderson came up against one of science fiction's toughest problems in trying to visualise a culture that is human in composition, but definitely superhuman in its development. He succeeds pretty well. Besides being a convincing, entertaining book, "Brain Wave" is in the Stapledon class as stimulus to thought about our future.

"Costigan's Needle" by Jerry Sohl is the first of this writer's novels to see British publication (Announced from Grayson and Grayson). We don't recall him writing any magazine stories, but he has done several novels on various themes, all with fair popular success. This one is an interdimensional plot.

"Star Bridge" by Jack Williamson and James E. Gunn (Gnome, \$3) is a novel based on the consequences of travel faster than light. It is an interesting paradox that before even interplanetary flight has been achieved, much less interstellar, science fiction has discussed its cultural implications fairly thoroughly, thoroughly enough that its inescapable limitations under current physical theory are visible. Unless there is some kind of loophole in the limiting velocity of light, other solar systems will never be much less remote than to-day, in terms of actual communication as distinct from awareness. Only if there is some way around the light barrier to the science of the future can we ever think of interstellar flight as we do to-day of Mars. "Star Bridge" imagines such a method, kept as a trade secret, and leading inevitably to an interstellar despotism: that's the setting for a breathtaking thriller with faint echoes of "After World's End." Very much better, however.

Time travel presents some formidable problems to the writer. Wells, and other writers who used the idea for the next thirty years or so, and indeed plenty of writers up to the present, ignored most of the difficulties and used it simply as a device for introducing the reader to a past or future era. But after Charles Cloukey wrote "Anachronism," "Paradox" and "Paradox Plus" time travel stories began to be written more as science fiction than as fantasy, as the conditions of tempoanautics were investigated. Clifford D. Simak's "Time and Again" (first published in *Galaxy* as "Time Quarry") has a background of carefully thought out tempoanautical theory, but there's a lot more besides.

BOOKS (CONTD.)

this field, most of them in our Ace Double Novels format. Amongst our most recent publications have been a new novel by Phillip K. Dick called 'Solar Lottery' with Leigh Brackett's 'The Big Jump'; Poul Anderson's 'No World of Their Own' (serialised in *Astounding* as 'The Long Way Home'); Isaac Asimov's 'The 1,000 Year Plan' (our title of 'Foundation'); followed by 'The Man Who Upset the Universe' (this is 'Foundation and Empire'); Jack Williamson's 'Dome Around America'; Sam Merwin's 'Three Faces of Time' ('House of Many Worlds'). One out for December is a new anthology entitled 'Adventures on Other Planets.' In January there will be 'The Atom Curtain' by Nick Boddie Williams, with 'Alien from Areturus' by Gordon Dickson. We have a new top-notch novel by Phillip K. Dick, as yet unscheduled, for some time in 1956."

We haven't yet seen "A Short History of the Future" by R. C. Churchill (W. Laurie, 12/6), which is described as a critical work reviewing works by "Orwell, Wells, Huxley, etc.". That combination of names, however, is a danger signal. Approach it with caution.

There's another book which we wouldn't advise anyone to approach even with caution. It probably qualifies as fiction, though some authorities might differ. It's called "To-morrow Revealed", its "author" is one John Atkins, whose chief claim to fame seems to be that he has written a book about (if you will excuse the expression) George Orwell. Neville Spearman published it.

It's a pseudo-history of the future to about A.D. 3750, based on numerous science fiction books and some short stories. He doesn't bother listing them, but for examples: Wells' "War of the Worlds", C. S. Lewis' theological fantasies, Huxley's "Brave New World", Orwell's "1984", Graves' "Seven Days in New Crete", Stewart's "Earth Abides", Connington's "Nord-enholt's Million", Russell's "Sinister Barrier", van Vogt's "World of Null-A", Wyndham's "The Kraken Wakes", the Kuttners' "Home is the Hunter", Shaara's "Orphans of the Void". And lots more.

No coherence, naturally. S.F. authors do not write for a fool trying to reconcile their guesses, dreams and predictions with each other. Minor stupidities are legion, and Atkins isn't the brilliant wit he seems to think he is. The attempts at profound thought are Orwell-Huxley-B r a d b u r y standard.

S.F. IN GERMANY

(From Julia Parr)

The monthly *Utopia Grossband* has begun publishing an extra "middle-of-the-month" issue, with a series of future detective stories by Wolf Detlef Rohr, a prolific if not very impressive writer, thus effectively adopting twice-monthly schedule. The alternate issues, each a single novel with a short readers' department, are still featuring translations from English by writers like Berl Cameron, Lee Elliott, E. R. Kennedy. Curt Slodmak's "Riders to the Stars," based on the film, was a recent title. An experimental "Sonderband" issue containing several novelettes and shorts is due shortly.

Editor Walter Ernsting has founded the Science Fiction Club Deutschland, aimed at bringing *Utopia's* readers together and encouraging formation of local groups. Club membership goes with subscription to the magazine, and a club bulletin, *Andromeda*, is mailed with it. The SFCD will hold its first national Convention next summer — meanwhile, independent fan activities are afoot, with several fan publications.

IN GENERAL

Well, that was 1955. It hasn't seemed a year of remarkable advances in science fiction, but in years ahead we may be able to trace back quite a lot to some of its events.

It has been a year of setbacks for the magazines; but do not forget the repeated pattern. Every few years a number of new magazines are launched to cash in on an imaginary sudden boom. Few of them achieve anything beyond overloading the field. There is room for only a few magazines at a time, particularly good ones.

Book publishing was a staidier proposition, and there were probably many more worthwhile books published than in 1954 or 1953, especially in England. There were probably just as many really bad books labelled science fiction, alas.

But, without getting over-optimistic, we think the general trend was far better work. There was less complacency and more interest in what can be wrong with science fiction among editors and critics.

In our estimation, the best book of the year was Arthur Clarke's "Earthlight"; outstanding magazine, *Astounding*. Important events—well, that's for posterity, or at any rate next issue.