

CURRENT OUTLOOK FOR SF FILMS

From about 1930 onward SF was always on the point of being recognised by Hollywood (that's a place where they used to make movies, kiddies) as a tremendous field for exploitation; every time Boris Karloff played a mad scientist role we all cheered and predicted success as imminent. Then it really did happen in the 1950's, only it did about as much good for SF as the comics did. By this time however we seem to have reached the point where they can't get any worse and any new developments must be for the better. Not many SF films worth sitting through, let alone of any value, have been made in comparison to the great output of slush, but we have had many more lately that we had learned to expect. Now it has been established that SF films acceptable to intelligent adults can indeed be made successfully, and we are getting them.

Of course, it doesn't mean the end of idiot imitations of the comics' imitations of early Amazing. But as you may have noticed, public taste has been changing pretty drastically, and B class movies generally are not going over as they once did. They will be fewer and perhaps a little better. Ten and fifteen-year-old duds still being shown on television and childrens' sessions show their age compared to recent equivalents. We have not seen the last of productions like BATTLE IN

Films

OUTER SPACE (sorry, "Battre" in Outer Space -- they got the Japanese actors to speak English as cheaper than dubbing) or MONSTER ON CAMPUS (in which a man gets bitten by a coelocanth and goes lymnanthropic) -- but they are no longer the mainstream.

The FORBIN PROJECT is the final title for the film version of D. F. Jones' disturbing novel Colossus, previously announced as Colossus 1980. Two sentient computers charged with total control of military operations of the USA and USSR pool their resources to take over the world. The book was a rare attempt to visualise the possibility without trying to soften it; the film is reported to follow the book honestly without introducing any false notes or suggesting loopholes for a happy ending. Universal, 100 min. col., director Joseph Sargent, featuring Eric Braeden, Susan Clark, Gordon Pinsent and some important special effects which establish the computer Colossus as the leading character.

SKULLDUGGERY (Universal, director Gordon Douglas, 105 min. col.) is apparently based broadly on Vercors' novel You Shall Know Them (also as Borderline), though this is not stated in the reports available. A race of human-ape missing links is found living in New Guinea, reminding us that the theme of undiscovered peoples in odd parts of the world, once a standard, is now virtually dead as it should have been generations ago with the exploration of all likely spots completed. The book was solely devoted to the question of whether such beings count as human, in effect what is a man; the film keeps this but adds much jungle exploration with a light touch mildly sending up the moribund jungle picture. Filmed largely in

New Guinea, featuring Burt Reynolds and Susan Clark with a small part for Chips Rafferty (not as an ape-man, they're played by Pat Suzuki and some Indonesians).

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES (20th Century-Fox, director Ted Post, featuring James Franciscus, Kim Hunter, Maurice Evans, Charlton Heston, Linda Harrison) is a typical sequel. They couldn't resist using those ape masks again. The satire may seem good enough for repetition: Films in Review comments that some of it "will offend many Christians" at any rate.

CAPTAIN NEMO AND THE UNDERWATER CITY (MGM, 106 min. col., director James Hill, featuring Robert Ryan) is claimed to be no more than "Inspired by the character created by Jules Verne", and sounds like a pleasing enough repetition of familiar old ideas. The 19th Century Underwater City theme is given its traditional utopian slant; living off the resources of the sea is taken no further than Verne suggested, missing a chance to bring in more modern concepts, though there is appealing underwater photography of real marine life by Egil Woxholt. There is some action with a dimly glimpsed sea monster of uncertain nature, and, surprise! The city is not destroyed in the end. Acceptable juvenile fare.

CHANGE OF MIND (20th Century-Fox, 98 min. col., director Robert Stevens, featuring Raymond St. Jacques) takes an old idea, brain transference, which was good for many a hammy horror flick in the old days, and makes good use of it. White D.A. of a bigoted American town is given a new body, that of a Negro, and has the experiences you might expect. Whites have become black before in fiction by one means or other, back to transmigration of

Films

souls in Donnelly's Doctor Euguet (1891) but the situation is still worth treatment. This film does not deal with more than a few aspects of it but gives a sober open-ended view of these.

Three examples of tried-and-false pseudo-SF junk seen here recently are THE BODY STEALERS, one of those invasion plots where the ET's become humans and are beaten off by wholly unbelievable means; MISSION MARS, with more monsters on Mars, energy eaters this time; DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, a Japanese effort at least intended as a joke, using a variety of monsters from previous masterpieces -- Godzilla and others are first manipulated by ET's, then change sides and save good old Earth.

IN SEARCH OF THE CASTAWAYS, yet another product of the Disney machine, does not seem to have a SF element, but as it is based on the Vorne trilogy has some marginal interest.

The ANTIOMEDA STRAIN, Michael Crichton's feeble effort about an ET plague, highly successful with naive critics, is also to be inflicted on us in a film version from Universal, director Robert Wise, featuring James Olson and Kate Reid. It may end up as an acceptable mediocrity but can hardly go higher.

The Mind of Mr. Soames, a 1961 novel by Charles Eric Maine which made even less stir than most of his output, is about a lifelong human vegetable brought to consciousness and proving to be super-human. Columbia are filming it as THE INCREDIBLE MIND OF MR. SOAMES (haven't we rather outgrown this kind of nonsense?), director Alan Cooke, featuring Terence Stamp and Robert Vaughn.

WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH is announced from Hammer, which may please some of us. Warner announce TEX 1138, said to be about a computer.

controlled world (perhaps first of a wave of imitations set off by The Forbin Project?) directed by George Lucas, featuring Robert Duvall and Donald Pleasence. Also STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND from Heinlein's novel which begins as apparently SF but wanders off into the supernatural. A highly un-filmable book; what they can do with a literal Heaven complete with angels may be worth looking at. But what a pity this should be the first recognition of Heinlein by a film producer. To the score of opportunities missed add those represented by The Puppet Masters, Double Star, perhaps Have Space Suit, Will Travel and others. Another Warner project described as SF is TROG, on which no more is known as yet.

CURRENT SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS

BOYD, John

THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN. Gollancz. 212 p. 25/-
(1st Weybright 1969)

CAIDIN, Martin, 1927-

MAROONED. Gorgi. 308 p. PB 6/-. A revised version, to what extent unknown, influenced by the film. (1st Dutton, 1964; Hodder, 1964; Bantam 1965) Reviews: Library Journal 1.3.64 p. 1112; The Australian 27.3.65 p. 13; Bulletin (Sydney) 24.4.65 p. 55

CARTER, Angela

HEROES AND VILLAINS. Heinemann. 214 p. HC. A curious decadent-future novel. Review: Canberra Times 23.5.70 p. 15

CRAIG, David

CONTACT LOST. J.Cape. 209 p. HC. Marginal, political intrigue and espionage a few years hence, third of a series following The Alias Man

Books

and Message Ends. Review: Canberra Times 30.5.70
p. 13

POHL, Frederik

The AGE OF THE PUSSEYFOOT. Gollancz, 191 p.
25/- (In Galaxy Oct 1965-Feb 1966. Trident,
1969) Reviews: F&SF Apr 1969 p. 45; Venture
Aug 1969 p. 124

RANKINE, John [i.e. Douglas Rankine Mason]

BINARY Z. Dobson, 1969. 190 p. 21/-

Review: Sydney Morning Herald 18.4.70 p. 21

SHERRED, T. L.

ALIEN ISLAND. Ballantine (01815). 217 p. PB
75c.

van VOGT, A[lfred] E[lton] 1912-

The WEAPON MAKERS. New English Lib. 141 p.
PB 5/- (In Astounding Feb-Apr 1943; Hadley,
1946. Later editions all a much revised vers-
ion 1st Greenberg 1952, Ace PB 1966)

-- The WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER. Ace (87855). 156 p.
PB 60c (Short version in Thrilling Wonder Feb
1949. Book versions incorporate shorts The
Seesaw and The weapon Shop. Greenberg 1951,
Weidenfeld 1952, Ace PB 1954, Nova PB 1954,
New English Lib. 1969) Reviews: Astounding
US Oct 1951 p. 143; Galaxy US Sep 1951; New
Worlds 18; N.Y. Times 5.8.51; Australasian Post
19.3.53

WHITE, Ted

NO TIME LIKE TOMORROW. Crown, 1969. 152 p. HC
Review: Amazing Mch 1970 p. 129

WOLLHEIM, Donald A. ed.

MEN ON THE MOON. Ace (52470) 1969. 192 p. PB
60c. Collection of 5 stories 1st published
1958; this edition adds comments on the Apollo
11 landing and the wording of the memorial
plaque, by 28 SF writers.

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION
Box 852, P.O., Canberra City, ACT 2601

STATEMENT ON THE JOURNAL OF THE ASFA

Originally the main publication of the Association was its Journal, which was intended to appear four or five times a year and to include a wide range of material: a comprehensive listing of new science fiction books, criticism, historical notes on Australian writing in the field, and some notice of current developments.

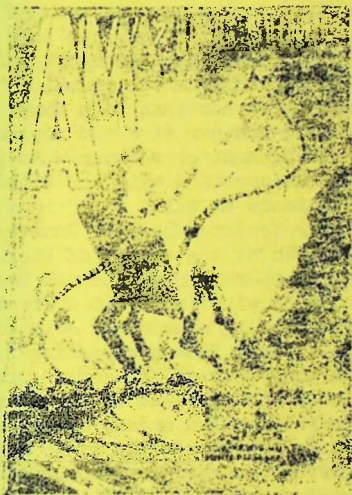
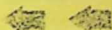
While these aims were generally achieved, it was found that there was a continued problem of obtaining enough material. This was largely of the nature of work in progress, and was not easy to produce or demand. Only eleven issues were published, therefore, from September 1965 to December 1968. This was highly unsatisfactory to many members who looked for a more frequent and regular contact.

In 1969, therefore, the Journal was temporarily allowed to lapse while the monthly SCIENCE FICTION NEWS was commenced. This more modest project has partly assumed the role of the Journal; it makes possible a more up to date current record of new books (with a record of the main reviews) and is a better vehicle for comment on the current scene and for reviews. But it was not intended to replace the Journal completely.

While the problem of material still remains, it is intended to resume publication of the Journal occasionally in 1970. Subscribers have had their terms extended (when we think renewal is due we will notify them) and will also be receiving Science Fiction News.

Bibliographical work has been proceeding, and future supplementary material to the Journal is to include a cumulation of previous book lists and continuation of the short story index.

LOOKING BACKWARD



April 1938, and the last issue of *Amazing Stories* edited by Dr. T. O'Connor Sloan ended an era. *Amazing* had already seemed quaint and old-fashioned beside its lively contemporaries, the *Astounding* which had just changed from *Astounding Stories* to *Astounding Science Fiction* and passed from the anonymous F. Orlin Tremaine to the equally anonymous --- for the moment --- John W. Campbell, and the garish, exuberant *Thrilling Wonder Stories*.

Looking Backward

Months later the very different magazine produced by Raymond A. Palmer made quite a grotesque contrast. The new version was not much of an improvement, but it had a zest and impact that had been badly needed. Perhaps the strongest point in its favor was its emphasis on the immediacy of the future, as tomorrow rather than some day. Sloan's magazine ignored its own time and avoided as the plague any involvement or relevance to public affairs; it was unconcerned with the details of the progress of science as well.

This issue featured Neil R. Jones' *The Music Monsters*, twelfth of the series of stories of the Zoromes, brains operating mechanical bodies, here visiting a planet with important characteristics clearly impossible by elementary scientific knowledge since Newton. Pleasant reading with more idea content than many of the series, and illustrated by Leo Morey at his best on the cover. John Russell Fearn's *Zagribud* ended, or collapsed. This was a sequel to his thoroughly silly *Liners of Time*, providing further junketings through time and space full of vaguely conceived and ill-exploited novelties. The other two stories were *Daughter of Luna* by J. Lewis Burt, embodying a rather peculiar cosmology and little else, and *Annus Mirabilis* by Edward Carlisle (who wrote nothing else), which had nasty invading Martians as its main theme but threw in much more. Like the rest of the issue, it might as well have appeared in 1928 or 1918.

With unconscious irony the circular the new management sent to authors stated: "For the present we wish to stay away from amazing stories that offend the scientific mind as being utterly impossible..." Shaver was only seven years away.

The April 1978 issues of the other two American SF magazines were radically different in tone. In Astounding Lester Del Rey made a first appearance with *The Faithful*, in which man's best friend survived him. L. Sprague de Camp had *Hyperpilosity*, about a plague with no serious effects beyond making the victim grow fur, and what happened to civilisation as a result. Raymond Z. Gallun's *Iszt* -- Earthman was a sympathetic look at non-human intelligence. The rest of the issue was not on the same level of maturity, but these stories stand comparison with 1970 SF. In *Thrilling Wonder Stories* there was an air of thud-and-blunder, but Kuttner's *Hollywood on the Moon* showed some attempt to visualise a future industry in action and some results of interplanetary travel and settlement. Jack Williamson's *The Infinite Enemy* casually set up and demolished a whole universe of what we now know as antimatter. Edmond Hamilton had a mildly funny short, *Easy Money*, about matter transmission among other things. Fearn was here too with a simpler time travel story, *Lords of 9016*, involving maneating giant ants (then a familiar plot element).

The British *Talos of Wonder* No. 2, also on sale at the time, was on the other hand close to Sloan's *Amazing* in flavor. Fearn was here too with *Through Earth's Core* (title tells the story), and David H. Keller had an ancient (all of ten years) relic resurrected, *Stenographers' Hands*; selective breeding for better typists. John Boynton's *Sleepers of Mars* was a short tailpiece to his *Stowaway to Mars*, with human and robot Martians and the traditional desert world. William F. Temple's *Lunar Lilliput* (first published story) and Benson Herbert's *Invaders from Venus* were just that.

R E V I E W S

The WAR AGAINST THE RULL
by A. E. van Vogt

Ace PB (87180)
221 p. 75c

van Vogt is on record as saying this: "Ever since I started writing for the science fiction field, it has been my habit to put every current thought into the story I happened to be working on. Frequently, an idea would seem to have no relevance, but by mulling it over a little I would usually find an approach that would make it usable." (in *Of Worlds Beyond...* ed. L.A. Eshbach, p. 56) This is all very well. But this kind of approach to writing can have unfortunate results when there is occasion to revise or recast material. van Vogt has undertaken several times to improve on his first version and ended by producing something quite different.

This book represents about the limit of the concept of amalgamating a half dozen short stories into a book; so much is involved here that it would really have been simpler to forget the whole thing and write a new book from scratch. You see, this is not a typical SF series of stories drawing on a common background, but two quite unrelated groups plus a further unrelated story. It says a great deal for van Vogt's ingenuity that they do more or less fit together.

Firstly there are the two stories *Co-operate Or Else!* and *The Second Solution*. These had as one element the conflict of man and undescribed other intelligences with the implacably hostile Rulls, which eat people incidentally but are mainly bent on exterminating all non-Rull intelligence. But their main concern was with the Ezwals, intelligent carnivores with no material culture, and the efforts of the one man who has discovered their secret that they are intelligent to get them out of

AMERICAN MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS

available through the ASFA.

Members can place subscriptions through the Association to any American magazine.

New subscriptions -- usually about three months' delay in beginning, thence regular: usually an issue ahead of the newsstands.

Existing subscriptions -- why not let us handle renewals? It's simpler for you to pay us than remit to the USA.

Rates -- as charged by publishers. Convert to Australian by subtracting roughly 10%. Note correct overseas rates are not always quoted -- they add for postage.

Currently:	Amazing	per year	\$3-60
	Analog	"	7-20
	Fantastic	"	3-60
	F&SF	"	7-20
	Galaxy	"	6-30
	If	"	6-30
	Venture	12 issues	7-20

Other than SF? Certainly. For instance:

Scientific American	per year	9-00
American Book Collector	"	5-40
Hudson Review	"	4-95
National Geographic	"	3-55
New Republic	"	9-00
Popular Photography	"	6-30
Sky and Telescope	"	7-20

Australian Science Fiction Association
Box 852, P.O., Canberra City, ACT 2601

BOOKS FOR SALE

We have a few copies of the following:

The INDEX OF SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES, 1951-1965,
comp. Norman Metcalf. Offset, paper covers.
Easier to read and generally superior to the
MIT index, more like Day's 1926/50 index,

\$8-00

(Incidentally, Day's Index is in print and
can be ordered at \$9-00)

INDEX TO THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES, 1966,
-- 1967, -- 1968, issued by New England SF Assn.
as supplements to the MIT Index. Offset, text in
computer printout form. Each \$1-00

EXPLORERS OF THE INFINITE, by Sam Moskowitz.
Studies of 18 early writers. Quality PB ed. \$1-80

HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION, by Alexei Panshin.
Thorough analysis of Heinlein's work, one of the
few serious studies of modern SF. Quality PB \$2-20

ASFA Publications:

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION INDEX, 1925-1967. 158p.
mimeographed. \$3-00; members, \$2-00

INDEX TO BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES, 1954-
1953. Part 1: Scoops, Tales of Wonder, Fantasy.
36 p. mimeo. 30c; members, 20c
Part 2: Astounding 1939-1953.
65 p. mimeo. 45c; members, 30c
Part 3: Science Fiction, Future Fiction,
SF Qrly etc; Space Fact & Fiction; Strange
Tales; Thrilling Stories; New Worlds 1-21;
Science-Fantasy 1-6
72 p. mimeo. 60c; members, 40c

Australian Science Fiction Association
Box 852, P.O., Canberra City, ACT 2601

hiding and enlist their help against the Rulls. These have been left pretty well alone in the new version. The unconnected story Repetition is inserted between them purely as padding; this is about a plot by leaders in a human colony to murder a visiting official by stranding him in a hostile environment to be starved, frozen or eaten -- which fails through his superior knowledge of survival bushcraft. Transferring the scene from a moon of Jupiter to an imaginary extrasolar world certainly makes this 1940 short more acceptable, but it is irrelevant.

Then we come to two other distantly related stories, The Sound and The Green Forest (the latter by the way omitted from the list of copyrights). These had the common theme of conflict with a different race, the Yevd, which could mimic anything, people for instance. The Rull have been given this ability and substituted for them. The Sound is an eerie tale about a situation where anyone may be a nonhuman spy, and the impact of their presence on society, the specific action involving a generation growing up in a vast interstellar ship under construction. The Green Forest is a slight episode on another remote world where Rulls posing as humans are a problem. It is the weakest part of the book mainly because of the extreme vagueness of the plot and setting.

Then there is some business about a race of invisible creatures composed of energy fields (how they would function is glanced at hurriedly, which is more than this old concept usually gets) which appears to be new. It is brought into the last separate story, The Rull, in which one of each opposed species is marooned together and the human outwits the Rull in a hardly believable

Reviews

fashion.

Altogether, *The War Against the Rull* exhibits the van Vogt style and technique "warts and all", showing all the faults and weaknesses as well as the virtues and strengths of a unique writer.

-- G.S.

SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

issued monthly by

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION
Box 852, P.O., Canberra City, 2601

No. 16

April 1970