

# SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

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ROBERT W. FRANSON  
and DEAN M. SANDIN

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## THE SFR STORY RATING SYSTEM

Reactions to our rating system (see box on page two) have ranged from "clearly defined" to "terribly over-complicated." We feel the time has come to clarify and elaborate upon it.

Many people must wonder how we arrived at such a system. Did we just pick it out of a hat? The answer is that we had a lot of experience with various rating methods before we launched SFR, and the one we use now is the best we developed. It may appear to be mass confusion at first glance, but as Eric Nelson said in Galaxy Reporter, "I have never seen a more complicated rating system which is so easy to understand once you get used to it."

One big question is, why do we use four distinct scales? We have received remarks to the effect that one scale would make things much simpler. However, this is not so. We discovered that, for instance, novels and novelets could not be adequately rated on the same scale for the very good reason that they cannot be fairly compared. Novels have to be judged on the basis of their standing among other novels. Novelets follow the same rule, as do short stories and novellas.

We have defined these cata-

## ANNOUNCEMENT

It is with deep regret that I must announce that I no longer shall be co-editor and co-publisher of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. I find that, for the amount of time spent on these duties, it is not worthwhile for me to fulfill them. However, I have a great personal interest in the magazine. Therefore I intend to remain connected with it under the status of contributor. I wish Bob unlimited success with SFR and I want to be a part of it in my new role.

DEAN M. SANDIN

gories by their word length. While admittedly the definitions are purely arbitrary, we had to take some position. If we had gone by what the magazines call them, confusion would have reigned because each magazine has its own definitions. It would be unfair to rate a 7,000-word Analog short story on a different scale than a 7,000-word If novelet. Thus our definitions do not make us presumptuous, but merely consistent.

Another point about the rating system is the varying number of divisions in each of the four scales. Novels have  
(continued on page three)

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## SFR STORY RATINGS

|                             |                 |                |               |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Story category .....        | NOVELLAS .....  | NOVELETS ...   | SHORT STORIES |
| Length in words .....       | (19-39,000) ... | (10-18,000) .. | (up to 9,000) |
| Worth buying magazine for . | I-IV .....      | A-C .....      | a-b           |
| Worth reading .....         | V-VI .....      | D-E .....      | c-d           |
| Read at your own risk ...   | VII-IX .....    | F-H .....      | e-g           |

NOVELS  
(40,000+ words)

Worth buying ..... 1-5  
Marginal ..... 6-7  
Buy at your own risk . 8-10

The ratings designate how well we liked the story. We do not rate collections or anthologies. Two stories "worth reading" usually make an issue worth buying.

### MAGAZINES

We review all of the science fiction magazines as soon as they appear. Since they all do not appear at the same time, not all can be reviewed in the same issue. We do not rate serials until the final installment.

Science Fantasy, October, 1963.  
112 pp. 3/- (45¢)

Michael Moorcock's "Black Sword's Brothers" is a fairly good novelet concerned with the age-old struggle between the forces of good and evil, with supernatural personages intervening. NOVELET - E

"Three of a Kind" by Steve Hall features a science-minded detective who uses up-to-date astrology to find a missing scientist. NOVELET - D

Fantasy and Science Fiction, Dec., 1963. 130 pp. 40¢ (2/6)

Damon Knight's two-part serial, "The Tree of Time," begins in this issue. It starts out interestingly, but slowly becomes less attention-holding. The hero is a college professor who is kidnapped by aliens from the future. "The Tree of Time" will soon be published in book form as BEYOND THE BARRIER.

"Pete Gets His Man" by J.P. Sellers is a fair story about a cartoonist's conflict with his character. SHORT STORY - e

### INFORMATION ABOUT SCIENCE FANTASY

Science Fantasy's subscription addresses are:  
Nova Publications Ltd.  
7 Grape Street  
Holborn, London, W.C. 2  
England

Gordon & Gotch (Australia) Ltd.

Messrs. P.B. Fisher  
564 Colombo Street  
Christchurch, New Zealand  
Subscription rates are 6 issues for 20/- (in North America, 6 issues for \$3.50).

The bimonthly Science Fantasy is digest-sized (about 7 1/2" x 5 1/4") and arrives in an envelope, in good condition.

THE TIME MACHINE, by H.G. Wells.  
Berkley, N.Y. Y789, 1963. 141 pp. 40¢

This novella describes a man's journey through the realm of time. The Time Traveler, by dint of his home-made machine, propels himself to the year 802,701 A.D. He confronts two remnants of the human race, the beautiful, indolent Eloi, and the industrious, repulsive Morlocks. Final marooning in this far era is one of the problems the Time Traveler encounters. This classic story is recommended to those who like adventures in time.

NOVELLA - VI  
— Gene Rider

ALL THE COLORS OF DARKNESS, by  
Lloyd Biggle, Jr. Doubleday,  
Garden City, N.Y., 1963. 210  
pp. \$3.95

In 1986 the Universal  
Transmitting Co. has perfected a  
matter transmitter with infinite  
range, provided that there is a  
receiver at the other end. This  
means of transportation is being  
sabotaged by aliens. This plot  
has been used several times be-  
fore. However, the book is able  
to hold your interest because of  
the main character, Jan Darzek,  
and the interesting social and  
moral relationship of Darzek to  
the non-human beings. NOVEL - 6  
— Glenn Keene

THREE STEPS SPACEWARD, by Frank  
B. Long. Avalon, N.Y., 1963.  
192 pp. \$2.95

Basically run-of-the-mill,  
THREE STEPS SPACEWARD is a  
short-length novel with action  
that is sometimes exciting. The  
plot is the rescue of an Earth  
scientist who has crash-landed  
on the second expedition to  
Titan, a moon of Saturn, and the  
largest moon in the solar sys-  
tem. However, the setting lends  
an aura of unreality to the  
book, because the author gives  
Titan a) Earth-gravity, b) an  
atmosphere much like ours, and  
c) thick jungles! NOVEL - 7

#### OVERSEAS AGENTS

SFR has been fortunate to  
acquire the services of two gen-  
tlemen who will act as our sub-  
scription and advertising agents.  
If you live outside the Western  
Hemisphere, you will probably  
save time and trouble by sending  
your subscriptions and ads to  
one of our overseas agents:

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Kenneth F. Slater | Graham Stone   |
| 75 Norfolk Street | Box 185, P.O.  |
| Wisbech, Cambs.   | Manuka, A.C.T. |
| England           | Australia      |

You will have to figure out the  
currency conversion for yourself  
or ask the agent.

#### THE SFR STORY RATING SYSTEM (continued from page one)

ten, novellas nine, novelets  
eight, and short stories seven.  
We have instituted this point  
because of another discovery:  
the optimum number of gradations  
on a scale depends upon the  
lengths of the stories in the  
categories. There is more room  
for difference in quality in  
novels than in novelets, so the  
former has two more divisions.

The box on page two breaks  
each scale into three semi-  
divisions: "Worth buying maga-  
zine for" (this also applies to  
collections and anthologies),  
"Worth reading" (meaning that,  
by itself, it is not worth buy-  
ing its book/magazine for, but,  
if you have the book/magazine,  
read the story; two stories  
"Worth reading" usually make the  
book/magazine worth buying), and  
"read at your own risk." A com-  
plete delineation of the novel  
scale would be: 1-supreme, 2-  
outstanding, 3-excellent, 4-very  
good, 5-good, 6-fairly good, 7-  
minimum good, 8-fair, 9-poor,  
and 10-horrible. The three  
smaller scales all contain fair,  
poor and horrible, with the rest  
various degrees of good. Ob-  
viously we are much more con-  
cerned with the good material  
(seven gradations) than with  
mediocre and bad material (three  
gradations).

#### ADVERTISEMENTS

Rates: 5¢/word, minimum \$1.00.  
Science fiction subjects only.

#### SDSFS

For information about the San  
Diego Science Fiction Society,  
write to the Secretary, Lawrence  
Beckwith III, 8402 San Carlos  
Drive, San Diego, Calif. 92119.

Wanted: OF WORLDS BEYOND: The  
Science of Science-Fiction Writ-  
ing, edited by Lloyd Arthur Esh-  
bach. Robert Franson, Box 1568,  
San Diego, California 92112.

THE FURY FROM EARTH, by Dean McLaughlin. Pyramid, N.Y. F-923, 1963. 192 pp. 40¢

Alex Frost, born on Venus and educated on Earth, returns to Venus at the outbreak of a war with Earth. Alex is asked to find what type of weapon Earth has developed which passed Venus' radar defenses undetected and shook the whole planet. After many weeks of investigation he finds that the new weapon travels three times the speed of light, breaking one of the basic laws of physics.

The story is very interesting and moves quickly. NOVEL - 5  
— Lawrence III

WAY STATION, by Clifford D. Simak. Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1963. 210 pp. \$3.50

This appeared in Galaxy, June and August, 1963, as "Here Gather the Stars." The novel has been somewhat expanded for book publication, and has also appeared as a Science Fiction Book Club edition. The hero, Enoch Wallace, was chosen after the Civil War to man a galactic way station. When the story takes place, he has manned the station for a hundred years without aging much. He has had to keep the station a secret from his fellow Earthmen. In his excellent manner, Simak portrays Enoch's life of solitude, and what happens when the government and his superstitious neighbors become suspicious of him.

NOVEL - 5

FEATURE SELECTION

SKYLARK THREE, by Edward E. Smith, Ph.D. Pyramid, N.Y. F-924, 1963. 207 pp. 40¢

The second novel of the Skylark series, SKYLARK THREE was first published in Amazing Stories (Aug., Sept., Oct., 1930). Fantasy Press published a hardcover edition in 1948. The hero, Richard Seaton, his friend Martin Crane, and their wives travel through the galaxy meeting alien races - including the Fenachrone, who are bent on taking over the Galaxy. Seaton and his terrestrial companions, with other races - especially the Norlaminians, who possess a greatly advanced knowledge of science - fight the menace, using such devices as a barrier impervious to matter and energy. The war is fought down to the final chapter of this exciting book. (4)

BOOK DEALERS

Readers have requested information as to good places to buy science fiction. The function, then, of this department is to recommend good science fiction book dealers, such as the following, which is run by Richard Witter. Send for his catalog: F. and S.F. Book Co. P.O. Box 415 Staten Island, N.Y. 10302

SUBSCRIPTION BLANK

Make checks and money orders payable to: SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, Box 1568, San Diego, California 92112. Ads 5¢/word, minimum ad \$1.00.

- \$1.00 for 10 issues...
- \$2.00 for 22 issues...
- \$4.00 for 45 issues...

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