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Address conventions: Unless specifically stated otherwise, all addresses published are Australian.

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News

Robert `Buck' Coulson died on the morning of 19 February. He had been hospitalized, and got through the night, but started to fail in the morning. The nurses called Juanita, who got to the hospital in time to spend a few minutes talking with him before he died. Buck was 71. He was a well-known fan, reviewer (for *Amazing*), SF writer (principally in collaboration with Gene DeWeese), fanzine editor (*Yandro*), and filk huckster.

A `lost' episode of *Dr Who* has ben discovered on film in New Zealand. It is the first episode from the story "The Crusade".

The executive committee of the Australian SF Foundation, following their AGM in January, is:

President:	Clive Newall
Vice-president/Publicity:	Richard Hryckiewicz
Treasurer:	Carey Handfield
Secretary:	Cath Ortlieb
Membership:	Jane Tisell

Now available: *Fanorama: Walt Willis' Fan Columns from Nebula Science Fiction*; 100 pages including covers, $US 10 postpaid (to anywhere). Available from Robert Lichtman, PO Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA, 95442, USA. Published November 1998 in an edition of 150 copies, this volume collects all 40 columns from the '50s Scottish prozine, *Nebula*, plus five more that appeared after *Nebula* folded: one from my own *Psi-phi* and four from Pete Weston's *Zenith*. Also included is a letter from Beryl Henley Mercer reacting to Walt's review of her fanzine in the penultimate "Fanorama" column; its republication was necessary to provide context for Walt's final column. Introduction by Robert Lichtman includes comments from Darroll Pardoe on how "Fanorama" paved the way for his eventual discovery of fandom.

(*Australian SFBullsheet* #110)

BANGSALE: Irwin Hirsh is acting as John Bangsund's agent in selling back issues of John's fanzines. Complete details are available from Irwin, 26 Jessamine Ave, Prahran East, Victoria, 3181. irwin@start.com.au or at http://www.vicnet.net.au/~sfoz/jbzines.htm The sale's UK agent is Dave Langford 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU.

(*ASFB* #113)

Clive Newall reports "1:00am, Thursday January 7th (or really late on Wednesday night, if you prefer), a rather loud noise disturbs the otherwise quiet LynClively household. Much running around, seeking out of cats etc. Nothing appears out of the ordinary. Go back to watching late night television/sewing as we were before. Later, while putting out some rubbish, LynC notices that we no longer appear to have a letter box. A quick look around locates various pieces of our former letter box distributed over a wide area. Narrowly missed were the front windows, and the car parked in the street. The boys in blue show up at our request the following morning, take away the remains of the home-made bomb (luckily it did not work 100%) and generally mutter things about "random act", "no need to be concerned". Move ahead 10 days. The local paper reports damage to a local brothel from a home-made bomb, and mentions in passing "four instances of letter boxes being destroyed by home made explosives" during the school holidays. Just lucky, I guess."

(*ASFB* #113)

Karen Pender-Gunn notes that she has negotiated a pension and that there are additional photographs of Ian's and her wedding at http://www.ozramp.net.au/~fiawol

(*ASFB* #113)

Richard Pursey reports Pulp Fiction has moved to the following address: Shop 1, Rowes Arcade, 235 Edward St Brisbane Qld 4000, tel: 07 3221 0666, fax: 07 3221 0667.

(*ASFB* #111)

Christopher Ballis notes "the Australian Costumers' Guild is bidding for Costume-Con 20 for the year 2002. The bid will be voted upon at Costume-Con 17 in Philadelphia in mid-February this year. The bid has the support of the state government and the Lord Mayor's office and looks like being successful. There is some resistance form US quarters seeing the event has never left North America before. The competitive destinations of Los Angeles and Denver, both put up after our bid was received by the service mark controllers, have fallen away. A delegation from the Australian Costumers' Guild will be attending CC17 to present the bid. Costume Con is the largest event of its type, a convention for people interested in costume and fashion. Along with panels and workshops and social opportunities, the feature events are two costume parades (what the Yanks call masquerades), one for SF&F, the other for Historical costuming."

(*ASFB* #113)

In past years the annual Austrek art show has gone from strength to strength. The show is being held on Saturday 7 August, at St. Mark's Church, Camberwell. All members and their families are welcome to contribute. It doesn't matter if you are a veteran of the art show, or if this is your first entry. All artists are welcome. The art show is always a fun day with creative activities for the young or the young at heart. Come along and compete in out traditional origami aviation race, come for the BBQ, or come and vote for your favorite entry. We will be having our traditional categories, plus for those less artistically inclined we are adding an invention or science section. Categories are: Color; Black and white; Photography/ computer generated; Junior (under 13); 3d (sculpture/props); Textiles; Invention. Entries due by the 3rd of July. Cost: $2 per artist. Contact Litza Waters at litzaw@yahoo.com Further information check out Austrek's web page http:// www.vicnet.net.au/ ~austrek or telephone Austrek at (03) 9489 8743 or the old fashioned way, GPO Box 5206AA, Melbourne, 3001

(*ASFB* #113)

The True Church of All Worlds (Inc.) is an organisation based on the books of Robert Heinlein. We invite fans and anyone interested to visit our website: http://www.space. net.au/~tcaw/. We will be holding Astronomy evenings, RPG sessions, computer training and games sessions and a host of other activities. tcaw@space.net.au. PO Box 120, Cannington, Western Australia, 6987. Phone: 0417 969994.

(*ASFB* #113)

The Australian Science Fiction Foundation is looking for nominations for its Chandler Award, given for lifetime contributions to Australian science fiction. Contact Cath Ortlieb, PO Box 215, Forest Hill, Victoria, 3131, for more details. Details are also available at http://www.vicnet.net.au/~asff/

(*ASFB #113)*

Karen Herkes reports: On Saturday 12 December 1998, an Aussiecon Three promotional Christmas party was held in Canberra. The `entertainment' was the "World Championship Science Fiction Celebrity Heads" competition. (Well, we figured there probably wasn't any other SFCH competitions claiming `world' status - so we might as well go for it!) Things got a little riotous in places, but local fan Christine Hawkins won with great decorum and style. An Aussiecon Three t-shirt was supplied for a door prize and was won by Anne Morris.

Christine Hawkins wins celebrity heads!

L-R: Annie Morris (showing her prize), Huw Buchtmann, April Herzog, Christine Hawkins, Alan.

Afternoon tea meetings for the Friends of Pern Canberra local group (Black Mountain Hold) are held on the last Saturday of January, April, July and October. Contact Karen Herkes 02 6291 8788 for details.

Fan Funds ALF

The Auld Lang Fund still needs more money to get special guest Dave Langford over to Aussiecon Three. A $20 donation makes you a Friend Of Old Langford. Donations should be sent to Marc Ortlieb. In addition, given the shortage of copies of *Silence of the Langford* at present, I'm auctioning the final three copies I have left. The reserve is $20. I will hold the auction open until February 28th and then the three top bidders will receive the books. Send your bid to Marc Ortlieb PO Box 215, Forest Hill, Victoria, 3131 or mortlieb@vicnet.net.au.

DUFF

The 1999 North America to Australia race is now on. Voting closes 31 March 1999. Candidates: Lise Eisenberg, Janice Gelb, Andrew Hooper. Administrators: Terry Frost, 4/8 Walker Street, West Brunswick, Victoria, 3055. Janice Murray, PO Box 75684, Seattle, WA, 98125-0684, USA.

FFANZ

Phil Wlodarczyk, Frances Papworth and Renaldo's Trip Report of their 1998 visit is now available. PO Box 33, Seville East, Victoria, 3139, $5 should cover purchase and postage.

GUFF

The Going Under Fan Fund (GUFF) is on again, sending a European fan to Aussiecon Three, the 1999 Worldcon. GUFF will pay the airfare for one fan to fly to Australia (and we're negotiating accommodation and membership of the con itself).

Candidates: Steve Davies, Julian Headlong, Paul Kincaid.
5 April 1999 - voting ends, winner declared.
2 - 6 September 1999 - The winner attends Aussiecon Three and is wined and dined by Australian fandom.

For further details, contact either GUFF's British agent Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Rd, South Tottenham, London, N15 4JU, UK or the Australian administrator Karen Pender-Gunn, PO Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria, 3130. fiawol@ozramp.net.au

TAFF

Vijay Bowen has won the 1998-99 TAFF Race to Europe, defeating Sarah Prince.

Awards

1999 Philip K Dick Award Nominees

Slaughtermatic	Steve Aylett	(FWE)
Lost Pages	Paul Di Filippo	(FWE)
Brown Girl In the Ring	Nalo Hopkinson	(Warner)
The Invisible Country	Paul J McAuley	(Gollancz)
253: The Print Remix	Geoff Ryman	(HarperCollins)

1998 Aurealis Awards - Short List

(To be presented 26 February 1999)

Division A: Science Fiction	Best Novel	
Singing the Dogstar Blues	Alison Goodman	(HarperCollins)
The Night is for Hunting	John Marsden	(Pan Macmillan)
The Centurion's Empire	Sean McMullen	(Tor)
The New Adventures: Walking to Babylon	Kate Orman	(Virgin)
The Resurrected Man	Sean Williams	(HarperCollins)
	Best Short Story	
"Transit"	Stephen Dedman	(Asimov's SF)
"Oceanic"	Greg Egan	(Asimov's SF)
"The Truth About Weena"	David J Lake	(Dreaming Down Under)
"Real Men"	Rosaleen Love	(Dreaming Down Under)
"Australian Visions"	Michael Pryor	(Aurealis 20/21)

Judges: Justine Larbalestier, Graham South, Jonathan Strahan

Division B: Fantasy	Best Novel	
Pilgrim	Sara Douglass	(HarperCollins)
A Shadow on the Glass	Ian Irvine	(Penguin)
A Dark Winter	Dave Luckett	(Omnibus)
Cold Iron	Sophie Masson	(Hodder)
Fire Angels	Jane Routley	(Avon)
	Best Short Story	
"A Walk-On Part in the War"	Stephen Dedman	(Dreaming Down Under)
"Jetsam"	Kerry Greenwood	(Dreaming Down Under)
"Queen of Soulmates"	Sean McMullen	(Dreaming Down Under)
"To Avalon"	Jane Routley	(Dreaming Down Under)
"The Bath House"	Keith Taylor	(Fantastic Worlds)

Judges: Jenny Blackford, Van Ikin, Norman Talbot

Division C: Horror	Best Novel	No Award
	Best Short Story	
"The Marsh Runners"	Paul Brandon	(Dreaming Down Under)
"Dawn Chorus"	Glyn Parry	(Fantastic Worlds)
"The Third Rail"	Aaron Sterns	(Dreaming Down Under)
"A Positive"	Kaaron Warren	(Bloodsongs #10)
"The Glass Woman"	Kaaron Warren	(Aurealis #22)

Judges: Marian Foster, Sylvia Kelso, Tony Shillitoe

Division D: Young Adult	Best Novel	
Horsehead Boy	Rory Barnes	(HarperCollins)
Singing the Dogstar Blues	Alison Goodman	(HarperCollins)
Killing Darcy	Melissa Lucashenko	(UQP)
A Dark Winter	Dave Luckett	(Omnibus)
The Night is for Hunting	John Marsden	(Pan Macmillan)
	Best Short Story	No Award

Judges: Bruce Gillespie, Rosaleen Love, Sean Williams

Conveners' Award

Paul Collins, Sean McMullen & Steven Paulsen, for: *The MUP Encyclopedia of Australian Science Fiction & Fantasy* (Melbourne University Press)
Jack Dann & Janeen Webb, for their anthology: *Dreaming Down-Under* (HarperCollins)
Greg Egan, for his collection: *Luminous* (Orion / Millennium)
Shaun Tan, for his artwork in: *The Rabbits* (Lothian)

Conveners: Peter McNamara, Stephen Higgins

SF Publishing News

Rowena Cory Linquist reports on Brisbane's Vision Group. "Our goal is to support our fellow writers and polish our writing skills to publication standard. Vision, the group for writers of science fiction, fantasy and horror, formed just over two years ago but already its members have had resounding success with short story sales to the SF magazines *Eidolon*, *Under Magellanic Clouds* and *Altair*, (placing second in the Altair short story competition), two of our people placed highly in the SF Writers of the Earth Short story competition, another came first in the junior section of Society of Women writers, and was Highly Commended in the Laura Fold Fair Literary Award. One member has sold to a young adult anthology of fantasy and an adult anthology of Australian SF. Two members have sold a number of books to Macmillan Childrens series. Transworld has asked one writer to rewrite their SF novel and resubmit it. And one of our writers has sold a fantasy trilogy to Transworld in Australia and Bantam in the US.

Because of the group's size (approaching thirty on a busy day) we have had to close to new members. But anyone wishing to join can go on a waiting list until a place becomes available. If we get five people on the list, well help them start a new group. The Vision newsletter is produced by Adrianne Fitzpatrick and comes out eleven times a year. It contains articles on writing, market news and interviews with writers and editors. Anyone wishing to get the newsletter can send Adrianne a cheque made out to Vision ($20 for a years subscription). Anyone wishing to see a sample of the newsletter please send two 45c stamps.

Vision meetings concentrate on writing, with lively critiquing sessions. As a group member I can say belonging to Vision has been great. I appreciate the opportunity to mix with fellow writers.

Spokesperson Newsletter Editor Adrianne Fitzpatrick, 102 Wadley Street, Macgregor, QLD, 4109. ajfabbey@power.com.au"

(*ASFB* #111)

Ticonderoga Publications has announced the contents for its final two collections, *New Adventures in Sci-Fi* by Sean Williams, which will be launched at ICon in April, and *The Lady of Situations* by Stephen Dedman to be launched at Aussiecon Three. Both collections will be limited to no more than 350 copies, and bookshop distribution will be minimal.

Chuck McKenzie notes that the release date for his novel *Worlds Apart* (Hybrid Publishers) has been brought forward to March 15 1999. The first book in the Zach Vance (?) Quartet weighs in at 332 pages and retails for $15.95.

AntipodeanSF 11 has two stories by Australian writers: "The Fish" by Simon Brown and "The Rats" by Brendan Carson.

Jack Dann has a story in the upcoming Bereshith Publishing anthology *Strange Attraction*, edited by Ed Kramer.

Steven Paulsen notes "My kid's horror/fantasy book, *The Stray Cat* (Lothian), has now been sold to G&G Buchvertriebs in Germany and the Watts Publishing Group in the UK. Korean negotiations are presently also underway. Meanwhile, the French edition is reported to be selling well and Lothian plan to reprint it in Australia in 1999."

Ben reports "*Potato Monkey*, a new sf/f/h mag is now looking for writers for its first issue. Payment will be in copies, (unless of course we find someone who wants to advertise in us). Send submissions to: Potato Monkey, PO Box 84, Darling Heights, QLD, 4350 or email them to q9323492@mail.connect.usq.edu.au and I'll pass 'em on to the editors."

(*ASFB* #113)

Article

by James Allen

So what do you reckon about Babylon 5 and the 1999 Hugo nominations?

(This article contains SPOILERS.)

In front of me I have the nomination form for the 1999 Hugo awards. What I am trying to decide is what, if any, episode or telemovie of *Babylon 5* to nominate for Best Dramatic Presentation of 1998. Episodes of *Babylon 5* have won the Best Dramatic Presentation Hugo award previously. Episode 209, "The Coming of Shadows ", won in 1996, and episode 310, "Severed Dreams" won in 1997. No episodes were on the ballot for 1998. What I am looking at includes "In the Beginning", the telemovie prequel first broadcast by TNT in January, all 23 episodes of season 5, the telemovie "Thirdspace" first broadcast by TNT in July, and "The River of Souls" telemovie first broadcast by TNT in November. Now we in Australia have not had broadcast more than half the season 5 episodes, (Thanks channel Nein!) nor have the telemovies been on TV here, but thanks to the magic of video and standards converters some of us, including me, have tapes. Thank you friends in fandom who lent me these tapes. All of this Babylon 5 is written by J Michael Straczynski, except 521 "Objects in Motion" where he shares the credit with Harlan Ellison, and 510 "Day of the Dead" written by Neil Gaiman of Sandman comics fame. OK, people season 5 and some telemovie **SPOILERS** ahead. You have been warned.

Of the three eligible telemovies, I liked "Thirdspace" the best, for it's horror/dream like artifact which is a gateway to a dimension of the dead who hate and destroy life. I also liked that Claudia Christian as Commander Ivanova featured. "In the Beginning", which is about the Earth/Minbari war, rehashes and shows us some things seen in first season *B5*, nice, but it has too many coincidental meetings. "River of Souls" features a lot of Captain Lockley, Ivanova's replacement, and whilst it is a reasonable story about the alien Soul Hunters with a nice performance from Ian McShane, it is not that memorable. What we are looking for is something with the impact of "The Coming of Shadows" or "Severed Dreams".

OK, so lets look at season 5 and its 23 one hour episodes. This is the season made by Babylonian Productions for TNT Cable television. It has a slightly reduced budget compared to the previous season and each episode is made in six days rather than seven working days. So things are a bit "tighter" and it affects the show. Also Claudia Christian leaving/being sacked (But she is not bitter, as she told us at Multiverse 3!) affects the early episodes which had to be re-written. There is also a feeling of denouement about the whole season. The civil war with Earth was finished with in season 4. Now we have the establishment of the Interstellar Alliance and the beginnings of problems with Earth's telepaths, but the first ten or eleven episodes are not that compelling. This is quite normal, note that the two award winning episodes were numbers 9 and 10 in their respective seasons. *Babylon 5* builds up to things. The new opening sequence shows us highlights of the past four years and of the questions answered and mysteries solved. Season 5 feels a bit flat in comparison and starts slowly, reintroducing the series for TNT and easing in Captain Lochley replacing Ivanova.

That leads me to my first notable episode, 510 "Day of the Dead", by Neil Gaiman. I liked this, it is a weird one with various characters encountering lost loved ones or people of significance during a Brakari religious festival. We learn more about Lockley, see Londo have one last night with Adira and Mr Morden clashes with Lennier. There is an important prophecy for Lennier, which he ignores. It is a good one, but not a great one.

Another notable episode is 514 "The Corps is Mother, the Corps is Father". It follows Bester and two trainee Psi Cops as they track down a dangerous mad telepath. It is nice and the ending cuts away the cosy sympathy some viewers may have built up for this interesting look inside Psi Corps. Perhaps a nominee.

Of the other early season episodes I liked the Byron and his cult of free telepaths subplot, but still I have no nominee. The later episodes of season 5 start to see closure of the five year period. We see the destruction of Centauri Prime. Characters plan to leave B5 and with an eye to the future `Crusade' spin off, the Drakh cause trouble for the Centauri. It is good stuff, but still nothing worthy of a nomination, I think. I did like the strengthening Lyta Alexander who discovers more of what the Vorlons did to her. A "big weapon" indeed. Really I find myself looking to the closure of the second last episode "Objects at Rest", where Sheridan and Delenn leave Babylon 5 and we have a new crew taking over the running of the place. Then there is "Sleeping in Light". Set 20 years later, Sheridan is dying and summons his colleagues to Minbar. This is my nominee, sentimental favorite, directed and written by JMS, even with a nice cameo of him turning out the lights for the last time before the station is blown up. The last episode ends in fire, just as Kosh prophesied. Sheridan finishes his journey. Yes, this is my nominee, it has emotion, it finishes the five year Babylon 5 epic and I liked seeing General Ivanova for one last time. So "Sleeping in Light" for Best Dramatic Presentation Hugo. Other nominations, hmm, films like *Dark City* or *The Truman Show*, I think.

This article was written with assistance from various news items in *SFX* magazine, 1996-97 issues; *Babylon 5: The official monthly magazine* screening lists; and *The Babylon File* - the definitive unauthorized guide to J Michael Straczynski's Babylon 5, by Andy Lane, Virgin Publishing, 1997. I recommend all these sources to fans of the show. Great photos in the magazines too.

Film Review

by Craig Macbride

Soldier

Soldier begins with an idea which seems full of possibilities. The army has been built up of individuals trained from birth to be fighters. Kurt Russell plays one of these soldiers, Sergeant Todd, with a long military career behind him. Whatever the task, he tends to get the job done, with as few words as possible. After the success of such soldiers, we see the up and coming new breed of soldier. Not simply trained from birth, but genetically engineered for superiority from the start. When the obnoxious colonel in charge of this new breed wants to prove their superiority, he pits one of the new fighters against three of the old, to the death. At the point, it's all down hill. Genre shifts at that point from science fiction to action. Kurt's character, believed dead, is dropped on a planet that's used as a garbage dump, but is actually inhabited by peaceful people who happen to have been stranded there. From there on it's an action film.

Now, I have nothing against action films. Even this one was quite enjoyable, if rather violent. (If you don't like violence, might be better to avoid watching this one.) However, we have had action films such as *Terminator* and *Total Recall* which consisted of a storyline set in a future world. Unfortunately, with *Soldier*, we have an action film with a storyline set up in a future world, but not really dependent on it in any important way. It continues on as though it were set anywhere, any old time. It's just the lone hero against the baddies with a thin science fiction disguise at the start, which gives the characters a chance to use some really nifty-looking weapons.

Interview

Interview with David Gemmell: Part 2 July 1998

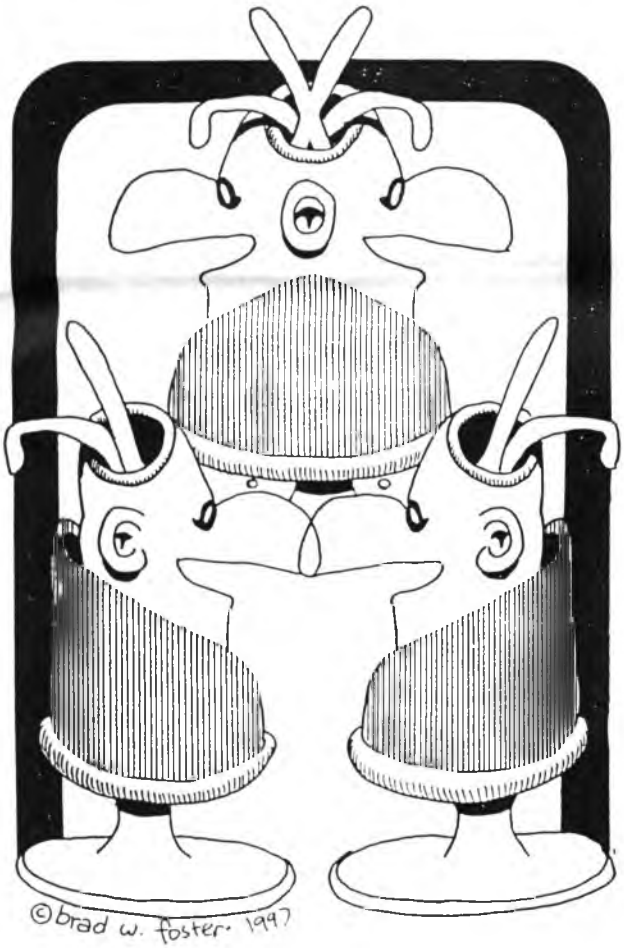
AS = Alan Stewart DH = Donna Heenan

DH I get the impression then that some of your characters are like children, totally disobedient.

DG All the best are, absolutely, the best are. This is where so many people make mistakes when they try to write. They decide where the plot's going, so they create a lot of characters who then take the plot where they want the plot to go. None of the characters row amongst themselves, because the author doesn't want that. The author wants all his characters to be friends who are going to go from A to B and do the things required. That's not real life. My characters argue all the time about where to go, and what to do, and who to see, and whatever. I sit there sometimes in blind rage because the story's moving away from where I want it to go. It's not as insane as it sounds. Robert Holdstock always talks about books springing complete, somewhere deep in your subconscious the entire book is done, and it's perfect. But trying to relay it from the subconscious to the conscious you get little threads from here and there and you're trying to piece them together. The worst mistake you can make is when a character does something you don't want them to do is to go `no, no, I'm not doing that', and scrub it out and retype. Because that's your subconscious telling you where you ought to be going. You should just trust it, follow it and see where it leads you.

DH And you trust your subconscious?

Oh utterly, It's never let me down yet, and I've been around for a while now. I've lost count of the number of books. It's in the twenties now.



DH A friend of mine reckons you do the best battle scenes that he's ever read. Do you have any battle training or military training that inspires you to do that?

No, it's a funny thing about violence. I grew up in a very violent area and I was a doorman in Soho, in London, which some people call bouncer. I was a boxer. I've got something like between 120 and 130 stitches on my body from acts of violence. Things like that. Look at that. [bares forearm]. See the scar?

It's a nice one. Broken bottle, tore the thing to shreds. So I understand violence and I understand men of violence. A lot of people I knew when I was younger were into violent crime and that was kind of the area I lived in. So I knew criminals. Then I became a journalist, after being a laborer, a doorman and various other things, so then I got to interview people who'd been in violent situations, such as wars and gangsters and politicians. Funny how gangsters and politicians run together isn't it, when you just think about it. So you get this enormous cast of characters and when you have an understanding of violent behavior it's very easy to just extrapolate that into huge violent behavior. So battle scenes are not a problem. Also I've studied history for all my life. Do you know why the Romans conquered the world? It's the length of their sword. That's all it was, it's the length of their sword.

DH Because it was longer and gave them a longer reach?

It was much shorter. Essentially it comes down to this. The Romans developed a stabbing sword, based on the Greek sword. The Greeks weren't into world conquest they were into democracy, so they could have done it too. The Roman sword, the gladius, was a stabbing sword. Because it was a stabbing sword it meant three Romans could stand close together. So whenever you read about Caesar's campaigns and it says one hundred and fifty thousand barbarians descended on fifteen thousand Roman soldiers, and the Roman soldiers defeated them, and you think "by christ these guys must have been something". One hundred and fifty thousand against fifteen thousand. Well, at the point of impact, because the Celts had three foot swords, how close could their friends be? So at the point of impact it was three Romans against one Celt every time. It didn't matter how many Celts were out there, it was three Romans against one Celt when it arrived at the point of battle.

DH So they were really always outnumbering the barbarians.

Yes, it didn't matter how many there were, they always outnumbered them. It's understanding things like that which also helps. So an understanding of violence and the way violence works on an individual level, and an understanding of strategy and tactics on a broad level, you put the two together and you should be able to get very good action scenes. But the best thing that could have happened to me was growing up in a violent area because you see and understand so many things. If you're facing someone who's getting angry and their face is flushed and red and they're shouting at the top of their voice, you shouldn't be worried. Because the face being flushed and red is an indication of something I think is called vascular congestion. It means that there's noradrenaline and adrenalin pumping into their system and they are desperately trying to wash it away. If they're desperately trying to wash it away they do not want to fight you. They're angry, but they're frightened, so they go red. You stand there with someone who's talking to you and getting angry and you watch their face go white or grey, and you're in deep shit. Because that is again the rush of adrenalin and noradrenaline into the system, everything's moving back from the surface of the skin so that they can feel pain less and you are probably five or six seconds away from extreme violence. That's the sort of things that you learn when you've grown up in west London. You learn without having to read books about territorial space.

So that you know that if you're a doorman and someone's getting arsey the first thing you do is step into their territorial space. And what is that territorial space? For the average man it's the length of his arm, it's a circle all around. Anyone inside that circle is in his space. For the average woman it's to the elbow, which is why women always discomfort men that they don't know. Because the guy will stand in a party or something and the woman will come up to talk to him and she's right in his space. So he's moving about saying "it's great" and so on, chat chat chat, and he's backing off and he's starting to go red, he's dripping sweat. All this sort of stuff you pick up on the street and it becomes very very handy when you're creating scenes.

AS You mentioned Robert Holdstock, have you had much to do with other writers in the UK, workshopping or anything?

I used to teach writing for a while at a place in Norfolk but stopped because the person running it was also a writer doing plays, and then she got off the ground as a novelist she just didn't have time to do it. I haven't taught since then. I know most of the other fantasy authors, I've met them at conventions and places like that. But I don't mix with them because I don't read their work. I've nothing to say. A lot of the work that I did look at in the early days I didn't like anyway. Rob's an exception. I did read *Lavondyss*. I thought it was a fabulous fabulous story. Infinitely better I thought than *Mythago Wood* which won the 1984 Award. I think Rob is a tremendous writer. Terry [Pratchett], whom I'm out here with, he and I stay in touch a lot and I suppose he's the closest thing I have to a friend in the business. But I don't keep in touch.

AS Do you go to conventions as a Guest, or is usually the publishers who send you along?

I go if I'm invited as a Guest. I rarely do conventions these days. I don't enjoy them much. I do a lot of touring and I meet a lot of my fans. But conventions I don't enjoy a lot. I haven't got a lot to contribute because if you go on a panel and the panel is discussing fantasy in the 90s, well I can talk about Gemmell's fantasy in the 90s, but nobody else's. Years ago someone sent me an American novel, an American fantasy novel. A friend of mine sent it to me and said I really ought to read this because it's one of the biggest selling books around. It's the last book I had that I threw across the room. I read the first fifty pages of this and I thought to myself I don't need to see any more of this because if I see any more of this it's going to really affect my writing. The thought that this was selling in its millions, because it was nonsense. I like credibility in characters and I tend to think to myself when I'm reading. I don't like to see the author putting stuff in which is purely there to push the plot along and it's so obvious.

For instance, example, if this was my home and you had come to visit me and you wanted to go for a walk and I say to you "Okay, when you get out the front door if you turn left and walk down there's a brilliant bar, there's a lovely park, some fabulous things to do and everyone's friendly and the food is very cheap. But if you turn right, within a hundred yards there is a chain saw gang of lunatics who will saw your legs off. They will, they are murderers, and no one can do anything about them". Is it likely that you're going to walk up to the door and you're going to say "let's go down to that little pub", and you're going to say "no, I want to go right". Then you're going to say "but there are chainsaw gangs there". "Nobody tells me what to do" says the princess and off they go to the right and then the chain saw gang comes running out and the princess twists her ankle, and then you go "stop" and suddenly unbeknownst to you some magical thing has started in your body that you knew nothing about and has turned the chain saw gang to stone. Isn't that amazing? Isn't that bollocks. This book flew across the room and bounced off the wall. It's only the second book in my life that I've ever thrown across the room. So I don't read anything now. I've met the guy since, shaken hands and like him.

AS With signings and tours, is this Australian one more hectic than usual?

It's about the same, but most of my tours don't involve jetlag. It hasn't really hit me. I was awake at 2 this morning and I've been sitting up from 2 until 7 for breakfast, wandering around the room and thinking about stuff. Wishing I had a computer so I could do some writing, but I'm going to see nothing of Australia. That really is a kind of an upset. I've never been here before and I'm going to fly from one city to the next city to another city, off to New Zealand and back home. I'm not going to have time to see anything I'd like to see.

DH What would you like to see?

I know nothing about Oz at all, nothing. So when the lady from the Herald-Sun started telling me about the newspaper problems out here and she started mentioning politicians and I'm nodding thinking `Who are these people? What are these papers?'. She says of course our paper is the biggest paper in the Southern Hemisphere, and I think `at this moment I don't even know where the Southern Hemisphere is. My brain is scrambled eggs.'

DH It's owned by Rupert Murdoch.

Well luckily I've never met him so I have no opinion on him as a human being I certainly realise he's now one of the most powerful men on the planet and I don't like a lot of his newspapers because I was a journalist and watching the death of journalism has been extremely dispiriting to me over the years. When I was growing up if something appeared in the local newspaper people would say that it had to be true, it's been in the newspaper. You don't hear too much of that these days. It's a strange world we live in.

AS Transworld is your second publisher?

I had a falling out with Random House who have been bought by Transworld.

AS Transworld Australia seems to be doing pretty well with SF and Fantasy.

Transworld is a fabulous company. I've spent two years with them now. I'm talking Transworld UK, I don't know anyone from here, and they've been great. But then again they appear to be people who care about books, they do things right, they're professionals, and so many authors I know are dealing with wankers all the time. It's terribly upsetting. It's almost as upsetting as watching journalism going down the tube.

AS Have the posted any sample chapters or promotions on the internet at all?

My American publishers do, which is Random House/ Del Rey and they're a good bunch too.

AS I think Del Rey got on to the internet pretty quick.

They've done ever so well, but then the people at Del Rey I've dealt with are nice guys. I enjoy going across to the States to meet them. In the end it really doesn't matter if it's Random House or Transworld, it's the people you deal with. I think if Random House UK took over Transworld UK, and the people I worked with at Random House were involved now with my books again, I'd buy out my contracts and move. It was a bad last two years there, really bad.

AS In terms of sales, is the US the largest market, the best in terms of sales?

It's getting that way now for me. It took a long time to break through. It's a strange business this whole publishing thing, and it's not just publishing these days. It's the hype factor. True story. My books are coming out in the states, they're being chucked out, they bought twelve books, at a fairly low advance, and so they just bring them out one every three months, with the English covers on, and the books are going out into that kind of huge American mall and dying away. I signed a six book deal with Transworld for at that time in American money, a million dollars. So the head of the American company, who are chucking my books out, meets with my agent and he says "how are things going", and he says "not bad, I've just done a deal for David in England, a million dollar deal". And the guy says, "Million dollars? He's a million dollar author?" "Yes". The guy goes back to his people, calls them in and says effectively, "what are we doing with a million dollar author chucking his books out like this? What are you doing?" So he stops all the publications, calls them all back. Then they have a new marketing plan to make the best of their million dollar author. So now I've got Royo covers. I've got embossing, and out comes *Legend*, and bang, quadrupled sales over night.

DH So the cover does sell books.

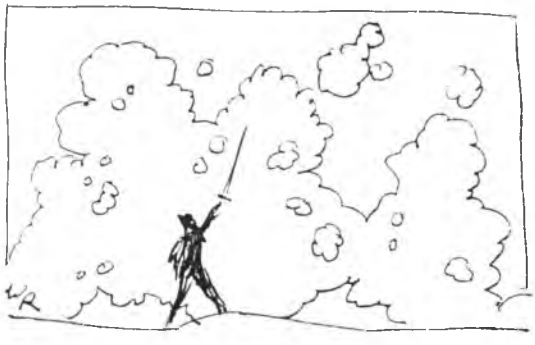
It's not just the cover, it's the principle of hype. The Americans were chucking the books out because as far as they were concerned in America I wasn't a name. But money talks. So a million dollar author has to be something, so therefore you are. It wasn't as if they weren't trying before, they were trying on a different level. So success, or even the perception of success, creates more success.

AS Do you get much fanmail, or letters?

Yes, even more since I've been on the net. I made the great mistake of just writing back to people. Now everyone seems to know my email, so you log on and there's seventy-six messages.

DH Only seventy-six? You haven't spread yourself out there far enough.

You're right, that's true, and I don't want to actually. Most of the fan mail I've had over the years has been good, and until a couple of years ago I used to be able to answer it all. Well, until about five years ago I used to be able to answer it all and then I started checking on first time writers, and I would answer then all first time writers, and I'd put a little kicker on the letter that this was the first time we'd corresponded and we probably wouldn't chat again, that kind of message. Then it just got too many to deal with, even for first time writers. There've been some really nice letters over the years.



It helps because when you're working in a kind of small box you know, in front of a small box, it's nice to get feedback from the people who are reading it to know if you're doing it right or wrong in their eyes. That can get confusing 'cause you get a letter saying: "Love your books, but I read *Morningstar* and it's the worst piece of shit I've ever come across. Did you write that yourself or did you let someone use your name?" I wrote that myself. Sorry you didn't like it. Then the next day you get: *"Lion of Macedon*, horrible book, and why can't you write more books like *Morningstar*."

DH Which just goes to show you can't please all the people all the time. Is there any signs of a reduction in the philosophy that good books must come in threes?

That's just publishers, it's got nothing to do with authors. If you wrote a novel that the publisher loved, the publisher would come up to you and say this is really great, can you make it a trilogy? We'd love to publish this and give you lots of money, can you make it a trilogy? What are you going to say, "I'm sorry, this is a one off. Take it or leave it". In your dreams.

DH I suppose it's fair enough

But I still think that's exactly what you should say, or maybe not exactly what you should say, but that's the point you should make. Because how many times have you picked up a new author, a new book, super book, and then the second comes along and you think `it's stretching things', and then the third comes along and you think `Oh christ, this is rubbish' so you don't buy any more. The author just gets tired of that characterisation you should let the author choose.

DH Readers get tired of that characterisation too.

`And that kills the author off. I've been lucky I've never had a book come out that's flopped. I think every one of my books hit the best seller list at some stage. Some have hit lower than others but they've all kind of made top twenty. So I don't know what it would be like to write something that, suddenly, publishers are ringing me saying "Hey Dave, we've got truckloads of these. We can't give them away". How that would actually affect what I do? I don't at this stage think it would affect me much. Because with the backlog I have, I have a certain confidence that's come with each of those books, but you take a new author, if that happens with the second book say, that's a killer.

AS Do you think it's getting harder to hit the best seller list with original fiction rather than franchised stuff like Star Wars or Star Trek, which take up X spots on the best seller list everytime?

I don't know. It largely depends on when you are published.. I remember when Random House wanted to get Tad Williams in the top ten and they were worried because they'd bought "The Dragonbone Chair" series for a lot of money at the time. I think it was a quarter of a million pounds they'd paid for these three books from a virtually unknown, and also they'd got a lot of bad humor coming against them because the three bids at auction were nothing, fifteen thousand pounds and quarter of a million. So yeah, they won, and the word got out and everyone's laughing because if they'd bid twenty they'd have got it. You know, that kind of thing, so they had to make it work. *The Dragonbone Chair*, which is a fine piece of work I think, I haven't read the others, but *The Dragonbone Chair* didn't sell as well as it needed to for a quarter of a million advance. The next one came out, *Stone of Farewell*, which did okay but still wasn't selling worldwide so they really needed something to hit. So instead of launching as you usually would with a big book in April/May or September/October, the two big periods of buying, they hit it something like June or July or February, one of those months where no major author comes out, and of course

immediately it whammed in at number five and it became 'Top ten! Sunday Times bestseller' and they started the momentum and it really worked. Once you've got that momentum going it's handy. So it depends when you publish how you do because all of the big ones come out in September/October.

AS For Christmas?

For early Christmas. It just happens to be the big selling time. Once authors are told they're coming out in February or March then they know their not actually cutting it in the majors. Because I've had a lot of that in my life, but I've started creeping up to those September/October slots.

DH Is that some of the milestones you use to guide yourself and your success knowing that when you get published is a matter of how well you're doing?

Publishers are there to make money, but I think too many people get carried away with the fact that publishers will talk to you all the time about loyalty, that they love you, that you're the finest thing they've ever seen, that they want you to marry their children. It's natural. It's what they all do. Your books stop selling and you're a leper. You won't get any answers to your calls, or if you choose to go to another publisher, that's it, you're dead. No one leaves a publisher. That's one thing about publishing, my agent warned me about this and I didn't listen. Normally, because I'm kind of an old pro now, I do six books as a contract series. I don't say what they are going to be, I just sell six books, and I can do what I like. When I get to book number four, I go into negotiations for the next six book series, so that I know there's going to be a roll over. I wanted to leave Random House and my agent said to me "Look, don't go into a roll over. Because you don't want to stay with them anyway and when you go somewhere else you'll still have two books to write for them, and they'll kill them." I said, "don't be ridiculous they're spending a fortune to get these books they're not going to spend that kind of money and kill the books". And he said, "David, you're a romantic". So we signed with Transworld, and I still had two books to do for Random House.

AS The covers on your recent UK ones have been quite good. Echoes of the Great Song was distinstive. Are they used on the US editions nowadays?

No. The US is still doing Royo. I think one of the things that was puzzling me, and was certainly puzzling Transworld, was that how from *Legend* coming out ninety-five percent of my fan mails were women. My biggest review was in *Woman's Own* at that time, and gradually as more and more books came out, all similar story lines, the fan mail changed until it was ninety-five percent young male. So did my writing change, or somehow my audience has changed, so why was this? Transworld did a lot of research into it, and what came back was if you look at them every blurb talked about death, violence, war. Anything that was spiritual, anything that had relationships, anything that was about camaraderie, anything that was about love was simply lost in the blurb. All the covers had a guy with a sword and a horse. So it was that effect, all the covers and all the blurbs were aimed at a young male audience. So what Transworld decided to do, after eighteen books, was try and broaden that readership base by softer covers, essentially more fantasy, less violence, and make sure the blurbs didn't have quite that same emphasis on blood and death. So it could be one of the reasons why Transworld sales have shot so well is because they're now broadening the appeal of the work.

Article

by Rose Mitchell

Mein Trek

Recently while trawling through back issues of fanzines [Ethels], I came across a piece by Melbourne fan, Paul Ewins, entitled 'What pisses me off about Star Trek'. Ewins proffered some insightful, albeit controversial, observations about the Trek genre. Some I agreed with, others I thought were rather harsh, if not down-right snotty. However, the article led me to ponder the pros and cons of Trek, mostly the cons.

My entree into the realms of science fiction fandom was via Star Trek. I have been active in Trek fandom for many years and most recently branched out into the world of general sci-fi fandom. I have a deep fondness for the franchise, in all its incantations, except Voyager, but that's another story.

Star Trek introduced me to the science fiction genre, and remarkable story-tellers such as Arthur C Clarke, Robert Heinlein, David Gerrold; to other sci-fi media such as the TV shows *Dr Who*, *Blake's Seven* and *The Twilight Zone* and the movies *Forbidden Planet*, *2001: a Space Odyssey* and *Silent Running* (my favorite sci-fi film). It has acted as the catalyst for a deep appreciation of science fiction, whether it be media or literature. While not the only art form I am interested in, it is indeed the foremost.

I consider myself to be a well-rounded, balanced individual and most definitely not a stereo-typical Trekkie. It is this non-conformity to a 'type' that has had me at loggerheads with various Trek fan aficionados around town. From time to time, usually when fan politics are at their bloodiest, I meet with a group of like minded sci-fi fans for dinner. We refer to our group as the 'Gotalifers', and at these gatherings we make a point of not mentioning anything to do with Star Trek or indeed science
fiction. A tall order, given that Star Trek is now considered to be a cultural icon, instantly recognisable in the pop culture. So much so, that the Oxford Dictionary has now sanctioned the famous split infinitive, "To boldly go" as correct grammar.

I could wax lyrical on the pros of Star Trek, most of which has been said in one way or another for the past 30 years in a multitude of publications, either printed, transmitted or digitised. Star Trek makes me feel good, and by default can't be all bad. One metaphor describing the phenomenon is that it's the artistic Prosac of the latter part of the 20th Century: widely available, but expensive to maintain. So, what pisses me off about Star Trek?

For a start, the women. Whether they be Starfleet personnel, brilliant human civilians or sultry aliens, they all have fabulously firm bust lines. Obviously in the future, woman kind will be able to defeat the effects of gravity. I have never seen any saggy tits drooping south. Standing side on, breasts point outwards, almost at right-angles, firm and upright with not a nipple poking through flimsy fabrics. Cleavages are well defined, even when modestly draped. Nobody's boobs wobble when they run and they stay in place during the most strenuous activities. Having breast fed two children and wear a D-cup bra, that really pisses me off! Secondly, how come everybody in Star Trek, Starfleet and civilians alike, are all intellectually brilliant, artistic and high-brow? Won't there be any mediocre, underachieving bludgers in the 24th Century? Given the diversity of humanity in this day and age, surely there will be some people who are fond of heavy-metal music, or worse, Country and Western, will sit around getting shit-faced, will have no motivation or sense of achievement and have low self esteem?

To labor the point, how come the majority of Starfleet members are officers? We rarely see non-commissioned crew members, or Grunts in the military vernacular. Top heavy with senior managers, it would appear that Starfleet does not practice sound business principles and depicts a poor management model of "too many chiefs and not enough Indians".

The art of science fiction is for the author, or script writer, to make the reader suspend his/her belief in reality. The Trek premise that in the future, all people will be high-brow, definitely does not fulfil this criteria. I find it difficult to envisage a future where for example, Joe Blow Average will prefer to play cello in a string quartet for light evening entertainment and relaxation after a long day at the office, rather than sit mindlessly in front of the telly because he or she is so stressed and just can't make another decision that day. But what really, really pisses me off about Star Trek is Trek fandom. It is a sub-culture governed by incredibly rigid codes of behaviour similar to those of religious fundamentalists. It dictates how a Trek fan must worship at the font of the Holy Franchise and no diversification from this edict is permitted. The overseers of Trek fandom are the Trek Nazis. These are the people who bandy about the phrase "good for fandom" or worse, "yours in fandom". What the hell does that mean? And more importantly, who or what body, appointed them the arbiters of 'proper' fannish behaviour?

These people angst over the terminology used to describe a Star Trek fan: Trekker is the preferred nomenclature as opposed to Trekkie which is considered unflattering and denotes that a person is not really serious about his or her fannish activity. Never mind that the term, Trekkie, has now entered the mainstream idiom and is listed in various dictionaries. I personally prefer the term, Trekkie, and refer to myself as such at the drop of a hat, only because it gets up the noses of the Trek Nazis. It is highly amusing to drop the term around a Trek Nazi then watch them go into apoplexy correcting the term. One is not even permitted to criticise aspects of the genre as this is perceived as undermining Star Trek, and heaven forbid, it may be taken out of production and/or removed from the TV schedules. A Melbourne-based fanzine editor is regularly chastised by the Trek Nazis for her often tasteless comments in print about Trek actors and staffers. She, on the other hand, defends her position. "These people work in Hollywood for Christ sake! They're public domain, big and tough enough to not give a rat's arse about what some amateur zine editor says, or, that some fat, little nerd is defending their honor."

God forbid if a Trekkie is seen to be behaving in a manner detrimental to the ethos of Trek fandom, which has been deemed to be 'family-oriented'. By whom is not clear, but probably stems from the owners of the intellectual property. After all, Star Trek is aimed at the lowest, common denominator; it's written for mass appeal across very broad demographics. It has been hypothesised that this is the reason that Star Trek has enjoyed such mass popularity and longevity. Clubzines are also rather tame: no controversial opinions, no vulgar language and definitely no sex. However, I'm a 45-year old woman with two grown up children. I prefer my entertainment to have more adult themes. While 'wholesome' activities can be fun at times, they're dead boring all the time. One Melbourne Star Trek fan club attracts much criticism from the Trek Nazis because the Committee like to frequent licensed establishments and often organise get togethers in such places. Some even take their children. "Shocking, just not good for fandom." Personally, I think Trek could do with a lot more adult sex, preferably involving myself and not alone either.

There's also the sanctimonious claim by these Trek fans that they are actually a public service because they, and the various fan clubs they belong to, support and raise funds for a range of charities - the do-gooder syndrome. Yes, this is a commendable activity but it is tainted with hypocrisy. I suspect that these groups raise funds for charity in order that the rest of the world will validate their activities and not brand them as 'nerdy fruitcakes'.

Unfortunately, the argument that "Trekkers" are fostering Gene Roddenberry's, the creator of Star Trek, vision of a future Utopia by raising lots of money for charity, therefore making the world a better place does not hold up. Mr Roddenberry accrued a great deal of wealth and other personal benefits from Star Trek and his widow, amongst many others including Viacom, the current owners of Trek, continue to reap these rewards. Charity is not on their agendas, unless it's for taxation purposes.

The reverence afforded to anybody, and it literally is anybody, who has worked on a Trek production is quite extraordinary. Take for example the rash of Trek conventions over the last few years, some fan-run but most organised by commercial interests. Several second string actors have appeared before incredulous audiences, who have paid relatively exorbitant entrance fees. For my mind, people who work back stage or in the production of the series/movie are far more interesting than an actor, who utters words others have written and moves as others direct. But the star-struck Trek Nazis dictate that these actors be held up as demigods because they appeared in a Trek episode or movie, however minor the role. Take a look at a few fanzines devoted to Trek and check, for example, the lists of birthdays of the allegedly Trek famous. Some of these entries are pretty obscure.

If the Trek Nazis revere Trek actors, then the awe they have for Gene Roddenberry is overwhelming. Roddenberry has been conferred the status of sainthood; he is held up as a virtual deity - as the Messiah (Trek fans are predominately WASPs), a divine man with far reaching vision, compassion and prophecy. A man for all seasons! For goodness sake, he was a Hollywood producer who got lucky. He admitted himself before his death, that he had no idea why Star Trek had so much mass appeal. He detailed a successful premise for a TV show. He was not, as some would have, a prolific philosopher. Roddenberry didn't create the mythos surrounding Star Trek, the Trek Nazis did. He was however, mighty grateful to obsessive fandom and so too are all who have profited from Trek. It's a decent little earner!

In the Star Trek universe there is a fundamental tenet of IDIC - Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations. However, it would seem that IDIC does not extend to Star Trek fandom in which conformity is the rule and this shall not be questioned. There is only one way in Trek fandom according to the self appointed keepers of the Star Trek Fandom Flame, their way or it's no way. Diverge from the path of righteous Trekdom, and you shall be cast from the Trek universe.

Thank God for the good old Aussie psyche: take the piss out of people who take themselves far too seriously and who have far too much time in which to do so. There's something to be said for the Tall Poppy Syndrome after all. In the words of John de Lancie, who snidely plays the omnipotent being Q, "It's only a TV show!" The definitive word on Star Trek fandom goes to Bill Shatner, supernumero of Trekdom, who phrased it most succinctly when he told a convention audience to, "Get a life." So too should the Trek Nazis and let the rest of us get on with enjoying our fannish activities in a manner we deem to be appropriate.

Faces of Fandom

An ongoing feature of *Thyme* which will put faces to the names of fans in Australia and overseas. If you have photos you'd like to send in, go ahead. Fairly recent, say taken since 1993 would be best, and all originals will be returned.

[Pam Wells & Paul Kincaid.]

[Hazel & Dave Langford, John Foyster. Reading, UK.]

[Mark Plummer (co-editor of 'Banana Wings') demonstrating the Croydon fishlifter. On his left: Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas. On Mark's right: Maureen Kincaid Speller (wearing 'Academic Bint' t-shirt)]

[Photos by Yvonne Rousseau, September 1996]

Aussiecon
T • H • R • E • E
57th World Science Fiction Convention
2nd - 6th September 1999

A regular column in *Thyme* to pass on what's happening with the current Australian Worldcon. Feel free to write in with opinions, contributions, memories of past Worldcons, whatever you feel needs to be said about and for the convention.

To join the convention send money to GPO Box 1212K, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001.

The 57th World Science Fiction Convention
Thursday 2 September - Monday 6 September 1999.
World Congress Centre, Melbourne, Australia
http://www.aussiecon3.worldcon.org
Phone: (03) 9517 1661

Guests of Honor: **Gregory Benford**, **Bruce Gillespie** and in Honor of **George Turner**.
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Membership Rates in Australian dollars (until 6 April 1999):

Attending	$225
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Payments by Mastercard and Visa now accepted in Australia.

Executive Board: Stephen Boucher, Christine Dziardosz, Donna Heenan, Michael Jordan, Mark Linneman, Perry Middlemiss, Alan Stewart.

Convention Chair: Perry Middlemiss
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Australian Database: Jamie Reuel
Website Administrator: Tim Richards
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Programming: Donna Heenan

("World Science Fiction Society", "WSFS", "Worldcon", "Science Fiction Achievement Award", "Hugo Award" and "NASFiC" are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society, an unincorporated literary society.)
Assistance to the bid was provided by the Australian Tourist Commission.

Article

by Lyn McConchie

The Joy of Writing

I think if I'd known how hard writing professionally could be when I began I might never have started. But I didn't have a clue. I got sucked in so gradually I never caught on to it being work. I joined fandom in 1980 and almost at once, (NZ is a small country with a small fan base,) was grabbed to do a few articles and reviews for *Warp*, our then national magazine. I did. Then I was urged a few years later to start entering the short story competition always run in conjunction with the Natcon. I did. Finally after I'd won a couple of years in a row, a friend said I should try selling something professionally. I have to say that the very idea left me in a dither. To me people who actually **sold** their work were God-like creatures far above ordinary mortals and I certainly didn't qualify in my own opinion. But what the heck. Markets could only say so, so I did - and to my astounded delight, out of an initial five stories sent out, I sold two. One to *Strange Plasma*, and the other to *MZB's Fantasy Magazine.* After that you couldn't have stopped me with an axe.

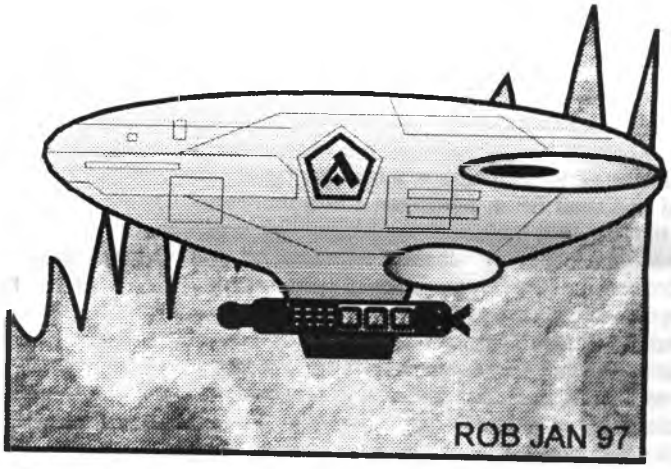
I did need to do something. Not as a 'living' exactly. I have a modest disability pension. I'm crippled after two accidents, one in 1977, and the other in 1986 which compounded the damage. (Sigh, I'd have got a third motorbike but my best mate said she'd kill me first. She was sick of rushing to hospitals.) But I'd seen plenty of people who retire with nothing to do and enough money to get by. They tend to die off quite quickly - from boredom I suspect. So once I'd bought my tiny farmlet and settled in with books and cat I considered what I should do as a 'living.' It had to be something I could do whenever I felt okay, any hour of seven days a week, and something I could do from my bed if I felt too in pain to get up but okay enough to still do it sitting up. I could only think of two things and Rasti, my elderly Siamese, wouldn't have liked sharing the bed with more than me. So I took the advice and tried writing.

It crept up on me gradually. A short story sale here, an article or poem there. In 1993, a whole book. A humorous stockingfiller-format non-fiction about my farm and the often very peculiar events thereon. I've been writing professionally for just on eight years now. I've had nine books published although some were pretty much peanuts but all were professional sales - the ninth appeared in November '98. I've had 92 short stories published plus a couple of dozen each in articles and poems. (As of the end of 1998.)

I've seen my work appear in America, Canada, England, Poland, Australia, and New Zealand. And I've come to a conclusion. Even counting regular rejections, occasional rudenesses, and the frustrations of always waiting to hear about something - I wouldn't want to do anything else. Writing is non-sexist. Editors don't care if you're male, female or Martian. Writing is none-ableist. Editors don't care if you're paralysed from the neck down. Writing is non-ageist. Editors don't care if you're a kid or as old as the hills. There's damn few other professions in which all of that applies. So I write. Quietly, steadily, on the average of ten hours a week on fiction, another fifteen or so on sending out submissions keeping up files, accounts, letters - to editors, friends, and professional acquaintances. If I'd had any idea of how much hard work was involved, I'd almost certainly never have begun. But I didn't, so I did.

And I'm glad of it. I've made new friends, had the pleasure of seeing my work in print, and the delight of actually being paid for it. I've been stopped by local kids who've read my children's picture books and want to talk about them. I've met people I would never otherwise have met. I've been able to write out old pain and celebrate remembered happinesses. I have four award medallions and one plaque on display. And I've had so much **fun**. I've been writing for eight years and if I never wrote another line it would have been worth it. As it is I look forward to my next eight years. Sure writers bitch at times but now and again we should all sit back and realise that writing is, or should be, more than mere drugery. Writing is a drug, a joy, a pain. Writing is what living is all about and living is what writing is all about. I want to live and write forever and I'm gonna die trying.

McConchie's Aphorism: Writing - long periods of intense activity, overlaid with longer periods of equal intensity watching the mailbox.



Thyme LoCs

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Is that an inside sheep joke? Even if not, I like the cover, and inside is Ian's roadside commentary. I know Rotsler left a sizeable legacy, I can only hope Ian did too.

My lists of movies to see is now up to four pages. Cable does look attractive with the newer SF showing up there, but I doubt the monthly charge would be less than video rentals. I did watch the latest *Hercules*, and had to chuckle even though I felt the ineptitude of the filming company was taken a bit to the extreme. Along with *Charmed* on the TV, I'm surprised that I'm enjoying *Brimstone*, too. As far as I know *Fantasy Island, Brimstone* and *Cupid*, are all casualties of the system. These are TV shows which I enjoy, but aren't going to be around.

The FFANZ Trip report is bittersweet, with it's best wishes to Ian. Nice CoA for Ian via Craig Hilton. Although all fandom had Ian as a friend, there are those who never met him and now never will. He enriched many lives and gave the gift of laughter.

I see the mention of Steve Stiles winning the Rotsler Award, and was thinking who I'd `nominate', and the ones who come to mind aren't in fandom any longer - Grant Canfield, Tim Kirk... But one who is still in fandom, Alexis Gilliland. As I understand it the Award is for `body of work', not just one year.

Tom Feller TomFeller@aol.com

David Gemmell's account of reading the fine print of a Hollywood contract reminded me of Irwin Shaw's experience with *Rich Man, Poor Man.* The seventies TV mini-series based on the book was highly successful. Shaw retained ownership of the characters, but the contract allowed the TV producers to make a sequel without his permission. Shaw later wrote that it had never occurred to him or his agent that they would want to make a sequel. Their sequel, *Rich Man, Poor Man Book Two* (I think), was made without any guidance from Shaw, who already had written his own sequel. This book, *Beggarman, Thief*, was later made into a TV movie. Consequently, there are two sequels to *Rich Man, Poor Man*, sitting in film vaults.

jan howard finder the.wombat@worldnet.att.net

I greeted the arrival of *Thyme* #122 with a cheer when I saw it included the final episode of *Space*Time Buccaneers.* I loved it. Tho I'm a little bit confused, I think, I understand the sequences, sort of. Gunny has done good! His movie cliches are spot on. They remind me of the "Movie scenes we'd like to see" from *Mad* a few years back. Of course, the movies actually did do one of these a few years back, tho it was a gag at first. The scene where Indiana Jones shoots the sword twirling baddie was not scripted. The reaction was so good they left it in. When It occurred on screen, it drew a standing ovation from the audience I was in. I'll be most happy to buy a combined edition of *Space*Time Buccaneers* at Aussiecon 3.

Enjoyed the several bits of news. Now if Dave Luckett can only convince his publisher to list with "amazon" and the other on-line bookstores. There is a list-serv devoted to getting kids to read and read SF in particular. I had mentioned Dave's books, but they couldn't be found over here.

Our local con, Albacon 98 came off well. We had about 350 come thru the door, including a chap named Steve Dedman. Everyone I spoke with was either having a great time or had a great time. Needless to say such success has gone to our heads. We will do it again next year. Our first annual short story contest produced four finalists. We hope to get more good entries next year so we can increase the number of finalists. Anyone interested in seeing the rules, can contact me at <wombat@sff.net>

I have to raise my glass to The Man With No Name and his Thylacon II report. It was magnificent. I have read a little bit of Pratchett and enjoyed it. I managed to get hold of *The Last Continent.* It was a most pleasant romp. Hmm, doesn't everyone know about "Drop Bears?" Oh dear, well, I shan't mention how to protect oneself. One has to go thru a trial period before learning the secret. The Aboriginals sussed it out originally. Then an American entrepreneur, born in the Australian Outback, but moved to the States later, learned about it. It is now used by Americans to ward off large and threatening ruminants while being totally unaware of its original purpose.

Re: Urban Legends. At the '93 Worldcon I recounted at a talk I was giving how in 1977 a friend and I split the cost of producing 200 bumper stickers with "Reality Is a Crutch for Those Persons Unable to Handle Science Fiction" on them. I had seen something like that at the '76 Worldcon and rephrased it for the bumper sticker. My friend, who now has a TV script in filming in London, helped me with the cost. We had hoped to get our money back. The slogan took off and appeared all over the place. Well, one woman kept insisting that I couldn't have come up with the slogan. She was quite indignant about it. I quickly let it go. There was no need for a scene. I knew I had done what I had said. It quickly dawned on me why she was so upset. The slogan had, by 1993, gone into fannish legend. I could know a chap who knew the person who came up with the slogan, but could not be the person who coined the slogan. This was against the canons of urban legends.

I would like to commend to you a writer of police procedurals who likes to occasionally tie in some magic, fantasy, horror and voodoo: Hugh Holton. I believe I reviewed his first novel in these august pages about three years ago. I've just finished his fifth novel *Read Lightening.* A real page turner. Check him out! Loved Robert Jan's bonzer review of *The Last Continent.* Retired...again. My career as a race car technician with the Skip Barber Racing School ended in September. It was a good run, but it was reaching the point of diminishing returns. I'm enjoying doing "nothing". I finally got some help on how to put my Grand Tour of Oz on my computer. It is turning out to be a fun if protracted task. I hope to get back to work on my companion book to the Upfield novels. I'm also looking for articles on Upfield, Bony, as well as articles tying them to Oz, the language, Aboriginals, etc., for the next issue of *Marsupial Mutterings* my zine about and on Arthur Upfield. Plans are slowly coming together for my planned mini-GTO next year. It clocks in at about 25,000km right now. A little bit of a drive about.

I was very much saddened to learn of Gunny's death. While it was sort of expected, it still hurt. It also creates a void that will be near impossible to fill. That being said, he must have driven in New Jersey. I swear that the road signs exist there! It is frightening.

Dick Jensen provided some very interesting commentary on his back cover. While I began reading SF in the 40's I never really got into the pulps. I did read some collections, but tended to read novels. It wasn't until much later when I discovered fandom and cons that I came across the old pulp covers. Them were the days, but today isn't so bad either. The con report by Jane Routley brought back some good memories of doing cons on the continent. I never did make it to Scandinavia, tho met with a fair number of them at cons in Benelux, Italy and even in the UK, which isn't really Europe or is it, but I digress and retreat from a topic that can cause arguments. Yes, most of the folk in Scandinavia are bilingual with English being their second language. One of these days I would like to get there.

Michael Hailstone's comments on global warming bring up an interesting point. How long is enough time to make reasonable estimates of where the temperature is going? I wonder, has anyone done studies on solar radiation over the last five to ten decades? Has solar output changed? I don't know, but wouldn't this impact on the global temperature? In *Fallen Angels* by Niven, Pournelle & Flynn, they postulate the opposite and give some good reasons for it. However, it is Politically Correct to scream and shout and run about over global warming. Mind you, I'm not saying we shouldn't look into what is happening and how to reverse some of what we have done to the planet. Actually, I'm all for the global trading of pollutants. If you are clean, you can sell some of your allotment to them there dirty wretches. The kicker in my scheme is that you drop the total amount of pollutants allowed by 1% each year. This may not sound like much, but it adds up over time and allows for industry to convert to cleaner facilities. The "all or nothing" approach often gets you nothing. The folks in the UK, Ireland and the rest of Northern Europe just better hope the melting of the Greenland icecap doesn't shut off the North Atlantic Current. That will cause a little bit of a problem. On another science topic. When the magnetic poles switch, what is the duration of the switch? Maybe we just hit it right for our initial studies of Venus.

E B Frohvet is being a little bit narrow minded in his comments about Sue Bursztynski using Xanthia for a black-haired lass. The hills where the lass lives are called the Xanthia Range from all the yellow ocher (not ocker) there. This is a regional name for her and has nothing to do with her hair color. (How's that for faking up a reason?) Rick Kennet, you mean to say that Oz has width and depth? Dang. You mean it isn't possible to have brekkie in Sydney & drive over for luncho (Well, hell youse add "o" to everything, except when adding "ie" and "lunchie" sounds like an Asian dessert) in the arvo in Perth? Darn.

I haven't noticed any books by Catherine Asaro reviewed. Pity. She writes good, hard SF with...wait for it...romance overtones. Neat stuff. She is also a very neat person. I'm especially prejudiced about her latest -*The Radiant Seas* - besides being a good read, she uses "bytelock" and mentions my coining of the word in the acknowledgments. Wheee! *[See Edward McArdle's review of one of her books later in this issue. AS]* Ben Bova's *Immortality* is a good survey of current research in life extension. Dean Ing's *The Skins of Dead Men* is a good thriller.

Well, I have my visa for Oz, tho, as I wanted it for six months, I had to prove I wasn't going to go on the dole one second after I set foot in-country. Now looking into getting a car for my wanderings. I've been told that I'll be charged hugeous sums of money to cash Travelers Cheques in Oz even when the TC are in A$. Or is this limited to cashing them in banks? Any truth to the rumor that the slang term for "bank" in Oz is "the Ned Kelly?" As in I gotta drop by the Ned Kelly for some money. Looking forward to the visit, the con and meeting some of the folk I "see" in your pages from time to time.

You had too many RIPs in this issue. Sigh! I basically knew Ian thru *Thyme*, tho I had met him briefly, all too briefly, at Intersection in '95 and had some email correspondence with him. Our loss. Ian, I hardly knew you! I was fairly good friends with John Millard. I had met him in '75 on the trip to Aussiecon. We stayed in touch and chatted when our paths crossed at cons or in Toronto. He was a good chap.

So where the hell is Terry Frost? When you going to get his subtle and delicate words back? *[I'll publish a column and reviews when Terry sends them to me. AS]*

Looking forward to heading to Oz in August. It looks as if I'll be conning some Sydney friends into allowing me to grab their backyard and living room for party. Among many other things I'm hoping to do is to set up a photo-op at the Taronga Zoo with a baby wombat when I get there. Details at 11.

A correction to Sue Bursztynski. You misread me. I was never annoyed at the Star Trek fans. I wasn't the one asking. However, the report brought back mirrored the reaction I received in '96. No media stars, no interest by the group. If anything I was saddened, not annoyed. We have invited, in our case a free membership, a number of media writers. (I have personally done so in some cases. No money, no show). Some have been there. Our first FGoH was head of the ST Welcommittee. Joan Winston was also a guest at the first Albacon. No ST interest. Yes, both Bjo Trimble & David Gerrold know of our con. Unfortunately, Bjo requires a fee in addition to air fare, room, etc. David isn't interested, understandably, in coming cross country and only getting a free membership. (It is my impression from what I've heard and read, that few fans make the cross-country trip in Oz. "If it isn't next door, I ain't going!" Money! The root of no media stars.) The budget for our entire con is in the area of US$7500. 275 paying attendees don't give us the kind of money you are talking about. Oh yes, any Aussie fan who makes his or her way to Albacon and shows their Australian (or other non-North American) passport gets a free membership. Do I hear any takers? It is quite different here. I can't say to someone, oh, you are in New York City, why don't you come up to Albany, it is only a 3 hour train ride, and attend our con. We'll give you a free membership. Laughing at us will be the least of their reactions. Toronto Trek does have a number of media stars. They also draw about 3500 at about US$30-40 a head. This gives them a slightly larger budget for guests. Now if the ST group wishes to bring in a media guest, we'll provide a forum for them and work with them.

I agree with Buck about the proposed LotR movie. I truly expect the worst. Of course, it might be a fine fantasy movie, but having little to do with the LotR. I can just see the movie halting while poetry is being read. "Skiffy" movies are all supposed to be about action, be it flashing blasters or flashing swords. Talk is not an important ingredient. That is where books come in. Hell, six 4-hour shows couldn't begin to handle it.

Yup, we need to save the world. The only problem is how to peacefully get rid of about four or five billion folk. I gave up on "Earth-Day" when they deep-sixed the idea of ZPG. After all, any attempts to limit the production of babies is obviously an attempt at genocide by the nasty white Europeans or their descendonts. Much better to have bunches of babies semi-brain dead by malnutrition than a few babies who might be able to cope with life. If you wish to control pollution you might wish to give Heinlein a read on the subject.

Harry, it is not my idea that everyone is connected to everyone else by about six people. However, I sort of like the idea. Especially in fandom you meet and chat over coffee, tea or whatever with folk from all parts of the world, like Japanese fans, a Romanian cabinet minister, etc. I had read about the concept in a Sociology text long before the Internet was even thought of. Apropos of my comments above, we have been above average for five of the last six winter months. This winter has been more of a chilly fall or spring rather than a real winter. "Now when I was a kid,..."

I recommend the following books I've gone Thru: *The Artifact* by W Michael Gear - he writes some good space opera, read a number of his books; *The Empty Crown* by Rosemary Edgehill - initial books in a fantasy series, good idea and well done; *Brute Orbits* by George Zebrowski - a look at penal systems, not pretty; *Moonfall* by Jack McDevitt - disaster novel where the Moon, not the Earth is the target; *Worlds of Honor* by David Weber - if you like the Honor Harrington novels, I'm hopelessly addicted, a must read; *The Widowmaker Unleashed* by Mike Resnick - the end of a fascinating trilogy, but Mike is always a good read; *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* by Diana Wyne Jones - hysterically funny and spot on, hard to read more than a letter or two a night; *Nimishi's Ship* by Anne McCaffrey - enjoyable, light and had a YA feel to it; and *the Lost Millennium* trilogy by Mike Moscoe - a good time travel story.

I have received word that I'll be doing some programming at A3. Looking forward to it. As the time for my departure draws nigh, I'll send it to you. Let folk know when they should flee the country. If anyone is in the market for a slightly pre-owned car, probably a Toyota Starlet, about mid-February, let me know. I might have such a deal for you. Probably have to pick it up in Sydney. Having been told to go soak my head enough times, I'm just about finished with my scuba lessons. I'll be doing my open water dives in June when the ice gets off the lake. If I survive my test dives, I'll be looking to grow gills with folk on my trip. I'm looking into doing some diving off the Great Barrier Reef. I'm given to believe that this is not the only spot around Oz that deserves a look.

I have read Renaldo's trip report. I found it quite amusing. Also amazed at a trip report being done so quickly. Look forward to meeting Renaldo at A3.

Brad W Foster bwfoster@juno.com

Hey, the world suddenly got a heck of a lot smaller, we're on the net!

I hope it doesn't sound odd to say this, but I enjoyed reading the comments from folks about Ian this issue. I had a limited correspondence with him now and then, but I mainly knew him as an artist who could alternately have me laughing my ass off, and then being blown out of my seat by some super-detailed, highly imaginative mega-creation, not just once, but again and again and again. His was a rare creative talent that couldn't be pigeon-holed into a single idea, and he will be much missed.

Keep 'em coming, and watch out for the Worldcon!

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Danger, Will Robinson! (No, I haven't actually seen the movie, I just always liked the line. Despite what it says about the total creative bankruptcy of the American movie industry.) *Thyme* #123 arrived in mid-November, and #122 mid-December, with an apparently uncancelled stamp. I don't know what if anything that means. I just point it out.

Bob Smith says that Poe's grave is in "an old run-down churchyard". Well, it's not quite. The cemetery is "old" - at least as Americans judge such things - but adequately maintained. Incidentally, no one is quite sure if Poe himself is buried in the grave, or his wife, or his mother-in-law. He was originally buried somewhere else in that cemetery; then someone correctly figured out the grave would be a tourist attraction, and Mr Poe was supposedly) moved to a more accessible site. Not that it matters, the symbolism is more important than the facts.

Why does Karen Johnson not program her VCR to record what she wants, and go to bed? Who pays $8.95 for a 48-page book? *[Books of this size and price are usually kids or young adult books, so would be bought by parents for their offspring. AS]*

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Enclosed are copies on an Ensign Bob cartoon I created for my Boskone slide presentation and then reworked to fit the format of *Thyme*. The cartoon slides illustrate my concept of `Fiction Science', the made-up science writers use in both humorous and science stories. I haven't completed my script yet, but I have a few days to finish it off.

I've been busy otherwise working on the captions and art for my second cartoon book, "WingNuts Go Hawaiian". I am up to page 34 of a planned 180. Creating humor is hard work even when it's fun. Beast wishes.

Murray Moore mmoore@pathcom.com

Call me an old fart, but give me the old-fashioned robots familiar from the covers of the pulp mags and cheap paperbacks. The time Robert Jan devoted to creating the art adorning the cover of *Thyme* #122 notwithstanding, the result does not stimulate my sense of wonder. If I may say so - and I do - Robert's robot is too stiff, too... robotic, yes, that's the mot juste for which I was searching. The robot holds what I have decided is a Super Soaker water squirt gun, with a Frisbee-shooting attachment mounted on top.

Pride of place for writing thish goes to Anon's Thylacon II report. The author's identity doubtless is transparent to those closer to the scene ~~of the crime~~. To myself, on the opposite side of the planet, and also of the equator, the clues are meaningless.

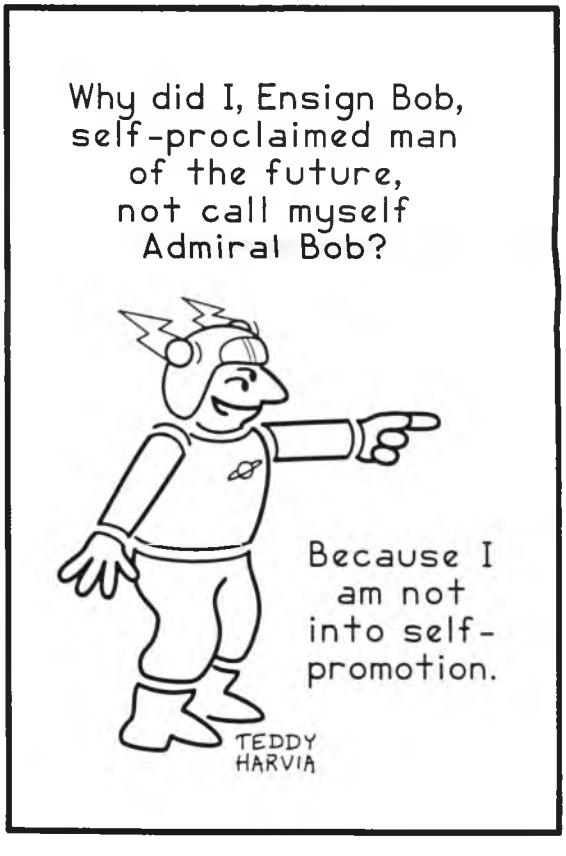
Thyme #122 contains the first details of the Hugo voting to reach me. Argument about the wisdom exhibited by the voters in the fan categories aside - I find more about which to argue about the wisdom exhibited by the fans who **nominated** in the fan categories - I am encouraged that a majority of voters for best Novel - 585 ballots - also voted in the Fanzine - 403 ballots - and Fan Writer - 370 ballots - and Fan Artist - 380 ballots - categories. The fan categories truly could be dismissed if 10 ballots were cast for Novel for every one for Fanzine. Most telling about the interests of the voters, the category receiving the greatest number of ballots was not Novel, but Dramatic Presentation (712 ballots).

I am oblivious to the appeal of mildly humorous SF and fantasy. I read both the first novel in Piers Anthony's Xanth series, and also *The Color of Magic*, the first novel in Terry Pratchett's popular series. I favor instead Ron Goulart's books. But Pratchett is an amusing interview, no argument. Faces of Fandom is always of interest to me, a non-travelling jiant. A valuable service, I say, and thankee.

I reiterate my financial support for a collected *Space*Time Buccaneers*. Good work, congratulations. Ian Gunn's cartoon on page two of *Thyme* #123 produced in me both the usual mental grin of appreciation provoked by a Gunn cartoon, and a sigh of regret that Ian's time among us is finished.

I am nearing the end of my reading of *Lord of the Rings* to our two sons. Theoden was buried during this evening's reading. I wonder about the filming of *LotR* by Peter Jackson. The report in this issue of *Thyme* does not indicate whether part of the $260 million will be spent on special effects. The result will be interesting regardless. A worthy trio of movies will be a bonus. I vaguely remember Ralph Bakshi's animated version. Bakshi's version was not worthy.

David Gemmell must be doing okay with income from his writing to be able, as he indicates in your interview with him, not to sell his characters to just anyone for the making of a movie. His reasoning is valid for him. Myself, I think few people who would see a movie based on his writing would realize that the movie they, hopefully, enjoyed, was based on a novel. Novelists nowadays are nearly as obscure as poets.



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Thank you kindly for issue #123 of *Thyme*. Indeed, an enjoyable issue, but enthusiasm is lacking, and I think we all know why. I won't be able to go to Aussiecon 3, but I thought I'd look at your website to see how much supporting memberships were. That is when I learned of the passing of Ian Gunn. This was quite a shock to me, and to Yvonne when I told her what I'd read. This must be a shock to Melbourne fandom, and indeed, to all of Australian fandom, and fanzine fans around the world. I hope Gunny's and Karen's friends have gathered around Karen to support her. We'd be there, if only we could.

Returning to the zine... it was a wise move to combine the Australian Natcon with the Worldcon next year. Combining the CanVention with the Winnipeg Worldcon in 1994 yielded mixed results, given that the Worldcon committee cooperated very little with SF Canada, the national pro SF&F writers' group, and the sponsoring group who staged the CanVention that year. I'm sure Aussiecon and the Natcon will get along much better. Should Toronto win the 2003 Worldcon, we've decided to openly bid for the CanVention and give it more prominence than it had in Winnipeg. Many thanks for listing the Aurora nominees and winners. The Auroras are becoming one of the better known SF awards, thanks to fanzines like *Thyme* and prozines like *Locus* and *SF Chronicle.*

As Jane Routley says in her Linköping report, Swedish fandom is small but committed. (I won't use the obvious line...) Then comes my recollections of various fanzines and articles on Swedish fandom, on how they've developed their own flavor of strange, their own fannish vocabulary, legends and traditions, and their own history of feuds and fights.

Good to see Michael Hailstone in these pages. I rarely see his writing outside of his own fanzines. Recently, I heard about an Antarctic ice-shelf or ice-area (I think it was the Ross) having been reduced 50% or more in size due to, among other things, the huge hole in the ozone layer over the pole. There have been temperature and sea level changes everywhere, mostly rising, and most of these changes can be linked to human activities and pollution. I do not pretend to know all the science behind these results, but given that, at this time, this planet is the only one we've got, dare we take the chance that we aren't fouling our own nest?

Wombat's letter... I don't think you can say that American cons are like Australian cons... there are so many American cons that are so different from each other! When Ad Astra, Toronto's regional convention, was set up, it was modelled on conventions in the Detroit area because the organizers attended those cons and picked up as many ideas as possible. Over time, bits and pieces were changes because some things that worked in Detroit didn't work in Toronto. Every convention must fine-tune itself to handle the business practices of the area, and the changing expectations of the regular members. Thank you, jan... my interests are specific, but they have changed over the years, and given that people are what I look for most at a con, I can enjoy myself at just about any convention. We've worked Trekcons, Whocons, filkcons, gaming cons and more, and while they may not cater to my own interests, the friends I have span the spectrum of fannish fun. Jan's tale of Trekfans not going to other cons if the con doesn't specifically cater to Trek... in Toronto, it's also true, with a handful of exceptions, Thank Ghu...

Follow-up on Murray Moore's letter... he says *The Truman Show* would have made a good *Twilight Zone* episode. Actually, it was. An episode of *The New Twilight Zone*, more than 12 years old now, had the same premise of a man with a typical family who discovers to his shock that his life is the premise of a very successful television show. Once he finds this out, he complains about not being consulted, and about his lack of privacy. He complains until the show is cancelled, and then realizes he was getting used to being a star. Be careful about what you ask for... I tried finding out more information about the episode he web, but *New TZ* websites are few. I believe it was written by J Michael Straczinski. *[Probably "Special Service", indeed written by JMS, and broadcast 9 April 1989. AS]*

All through this issue are mentions of Ian Gunn, plus artwork and mentions of his work with MSFC... it is hard to believe he's gone. I know he intended to collect all the episodes of *Space*Time Buccaneers* into one book... it must be assembled in his memory. *[Karen Pender-Gunn is organising the publication of the combined Space*Time Buccaneers episodes. AS]*

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Bradbury NSW 2560

Thyme #124 and various other items received February 3. Going by the dates it's almost as if Time stopped briefly Down South in early November, for good reasons of course. The numbness is still with Lyn and I, because the news took a long time to reach us. Purely by chance, I received a fanzine I really shouldn't have, in mid-January, which mentioned Ian's passing. If not, I would be flipping open this issue of *Thyme*, and finding out... In any case, perhaps Craig Hilton's illustration says it all. This greybeard fan salutes the passing of Ian Gunn, who Lyn and I knew only via his writings and drawings. I suspect you may spot his spirit at Aussiecon 3.

As I flipped from front cover to back photos, I wondered if the young Dick Jensen had any inkling of what he would be producing almost forty years in the future; and can we assume that is Ghoodminton thay are playing? The back page was certainly a memory-jogger.

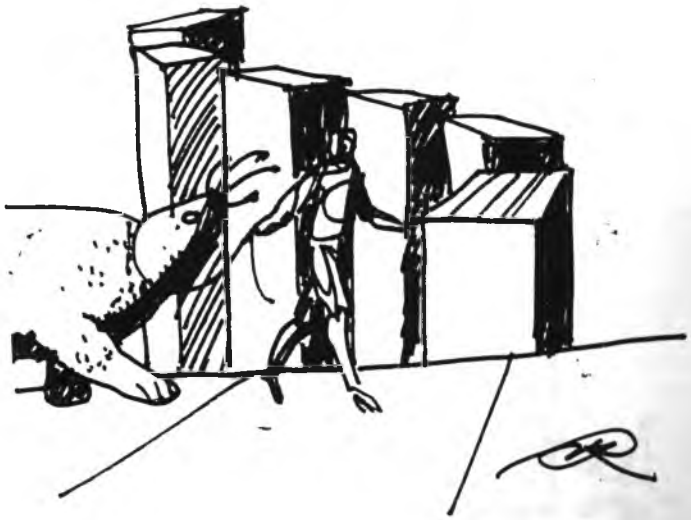
As usual, lotsa information, news and data to absorb, and the pieces on Ian were moving and appreciated.

Buck Coulson: Mentioning *Planet Stories* and Leigh Brackett, I have to pass on the fact that I recently plunged head first into "Lorelei of the Red Mist" (Summer, 1946) and probably haven't been the same since. I think the combination of Bradbury and Brackett was magical.

Harry Warner, Jr: Your little titbit regarding Sara Teasdale was appreciated. Both Millay and Teasdale are described as "being unusually frank (according to the standards of the time) for women poets". Wonder what they'd think of Sylvia Plath, for example.

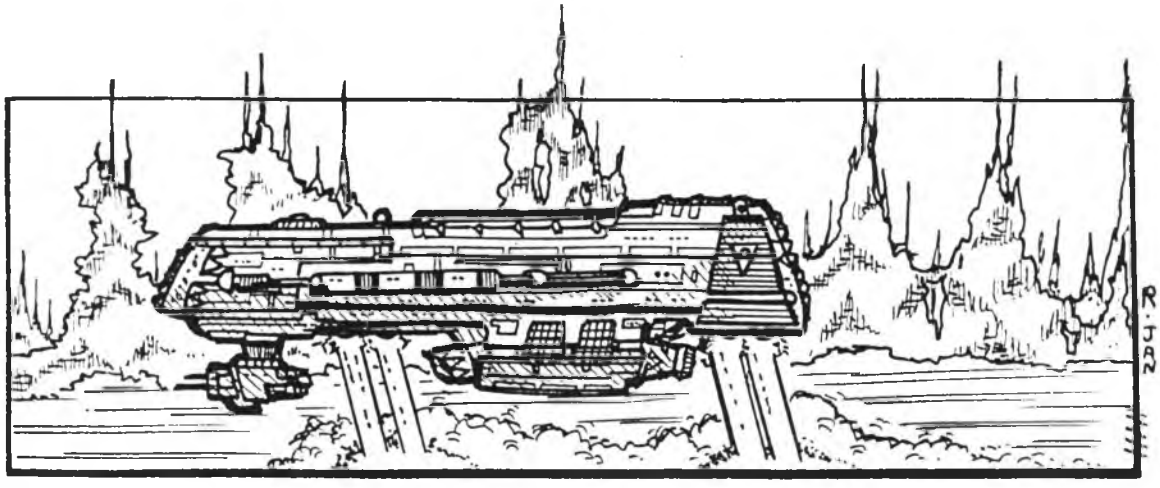
`Merv's Memories' greatly appreciated, and brought back memories for me also. I wish I could remember who it was that sidled up to me in McGills back in February 1952, and tried to flog me some of those fanzines Merv mentions.... If you'll pardon the much used: "Ahhh... Them Were The Days..." We will, in the fullness of time, have more of this I hope.

WAHF Roy Ferguson, Karen Herkes, Rose Mitchell, Ken Moylan, Yvonne Rousseau, and Colin Steele.



Social Calendar

January	9	Austrek	11.30 am	*Star Trek: Insurrection* post mortem, Jam Factory cinemas.
	15	MSFC	8 pm	Coffee, cake and conversation.
	22	MSFC	8 pm	Prophecy night.
	23	ASFF	2 pm	AGM.
	23	Enterprise	1 pm	Beach Day. Elwood Beach (Melways 67 C5).
	29	MSFC	8 pm	Anime night; Special General Meeting.
	31	B5 Club	noon	Mini-golf day, Swanston St. mini-golf.
February	3	Nova Mob	8 pm	Planning speaking calendar for year.
	5	MSFC	8 pm	Greek Food night.
	6	Austrek		"Little green men" - Victorian UFO Society talk, $4 members, $7 non-members.
	7	Conquest		Special General Meeting. Brisbane, Queensland.
	12	MSFC	8 pm	Star Trek discussion night.
	13	Skyforce	1 pm	Copeland Theatre, Melbourne University.
	13	Costumers		St Valentine's Day Feast. Contact (03) 9568 0708.
	14	FoSF	10.30 am	24 John Street, Lidcome. NSW. members $5, non-members $10.
	18	Multiverse	7.30 pm	"Cube" film preview, Kino cinemas.
	19	MSFC	8 pm	Babylon 5 Quiz night.
	19	Futurians		Room 1615, Broadway Tower, University of Technology, Sydney.
	26	MSFC	8 pm	The Dead Pool.
	27	Enterprise		Starfleet quiz and Quark's collectors' day.
March	3	Nova Mob	8 pm	Bruce Gillespie, Rosaleen Love: `Judging Aurealis Young Adult Awards'.
	3	Critical Mass		Juliette Woods: `The Lemurian Nineties', Writers' Centre, Adelaide.
	5	MSFC	8 pm	Food night - gourmet sausages.
	6	Austrek	2 pm	Kraft workshop.
	6	West Lodge	1 pm	Collins Street Centre, Collins Street, South Perth.
	7	Vortex		Red Cross Centre, 409 Adelaide Street, Brisbane.
	7-8	Westgarth	7 am	Star Trek marathon - all 9 movies. 89 High Street, Northcote, Victoria.
	12	MSFC	8 pm	Author night - Jack Dann & Sean McMullen.
	19	MSFC	8 pm	Swap, buy, sell - $2 per table.
	20	B5 Club	11 am	Zoo day, Royal Melbourne Zoo, $12.60 adult, approx. $7 children 4-15 years.
	21	Highlander Downunder		Red Cross Centre, 409 Adelaide Street, Brisbane.
	26	MSFC	8 pm	Coffee, cake & conversation.
	27	Enterprise		Zoo day.
	27-28	Multiverse		`20th Anniversary Battlestar Galactica' - featuring Richard Hatch. Edmund Barton Centre, 488 South Road, Moorabbin, Victoria. Weekend: $60
April	3	Austrek	2 pm	AGM; Show and tell. St Mark's Church hall, cnr. Canterbury & Burke Rds., Camberwell.
	4	Conquest	10 am	Valentine vs. Virus & SGM. Red Cross Centre, 409 Adelaide Street, Brisbane.
	9	MSFC	8 pm	Enterprise discusses?
	16	MSFC	8 pm	Coffee tasting.
	23	MSFC	8 pm	British SF - discussion by Doctor Who Club of Victoria and Red Dwarf Club.
	24	Enterprise		AGM and Committee elections.
	30	MSFC	8 pm	Michael Moorcock night.
May	7	MSFC	8 pm	Food & author night - Pasta; Kerry Greenwood
	14	MSFC	8 pm	Hugo ballot discussion night.
	16	B5 Club	noon	AGM, Hall 1, St Thomas's Anglican Church (next door to Moonee Ponds Community Hall).
	21	MSFC	8 pm	Author night - Lucy Sussex.
	28	MSFC	8 pm	Star Wars discussion - predict the plot of the prequel.



1999 Conventions

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS 5 March 20-21
Sydney Entertainment Centre **GoHs** Robin Curtis, Richard Hatch, Lawrence Scheon, William Shatner **Rates** $135 per person per day **Mail** PO Box 215, Forestville, NSW, 2087 **Phone** (02) 9453 0290 **Fax** (02) 9975 6043 **web** www.bobw.com.au

SWANCON 24 "ICON" April 1-5
Metro Inn, Canning Highway, South Perth **GoHs** Jack Dann, Dave Luckett, Don Maitz, Janeen Webb, Sean Williams, Janny Wurts. **Membership** $70 (until 11/10/98), $80 (until 31/3/99), at door $90, supporting $20 **Room Rates** Twin $85; Riverview $105; Skyline $114, Family $114 **Mail** GPO Box G429, Perth, WA, 6841 **web** http://www.iinet.net.au/~swancon

CONQUEST II (New Zealand Natcon) Easter 1999
Auckland **GoHs** Tom Baker, Alan Dean Foster **FanGoH** Mike Hansen **Rates** $NZ 50 until 31/12/97 **Mail** PO Box 74013, Market Road, Auckland, NEW ZEALAND **web** http://www.conquest.sf.org.nz/

FORCE THREE (Star Wars) June 12-14
Karralyka Centre, Mines Road, Ringwood, Victoria **Rates** 3 days $150 (until 1/6/99), $180 (from 1/6/99); single day $60; concession and family rates available. **Dealers** Professional $200, Convention/Club $100 **Banquet** $40 **Mail** PO Box 427, Northcote, Victoria, 3070 **Phone/Fax** (03) 9416 8998 **web** www.imageworks.com.au/starwalking

GRAILQUEST (Arthurian) June 10-14
Sydney University **Rates** $200 **Contact** Sophie Masson sophiemasson@bigpond.com, Cathy Simpson grailq@healey.com.au

AUSSIECON THREE (57th World Science Fiction Convention) September 2-6
Convention Centre, Melbourne, Victoria. **GoHs** Gregory Benford, George Turner (in memorium), Bruce Gillespie **Special Guest** J Michael Straczynski **Rates** Until 6 April 1999: Attending $225; Supporting $45; Child in tow (born after September '87) $45; Infants free. **Mail** GPO Box 1212K, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001 **Phone** (03) 9517 1661 **web** http://www.aussiecon3.wsfs.org

SPAWNCON TWO (Natcon) September 2-6
Convention Centre, Melbourne, Victoria **Mail** PO Box 215, Forest Hill, Victoria, 3131 **web** http://www.vicnet.net.au/~sfoz/spawncon.htm

BREAKAWAY (Space 1999) September 13
Christchurch (?), New Zealand

CONQUEST99 REFLECTIONS October 1-3
Brisbane **GoH** Richard Arnold **Rates** $135 (until 31 March); $175 thereafter **Mail** GPO Box 1376, Brisbane, QLD, 4001 **Phone** 0412 649 727 **email** pbuddaaa@zip.com.au

2000 Conventions

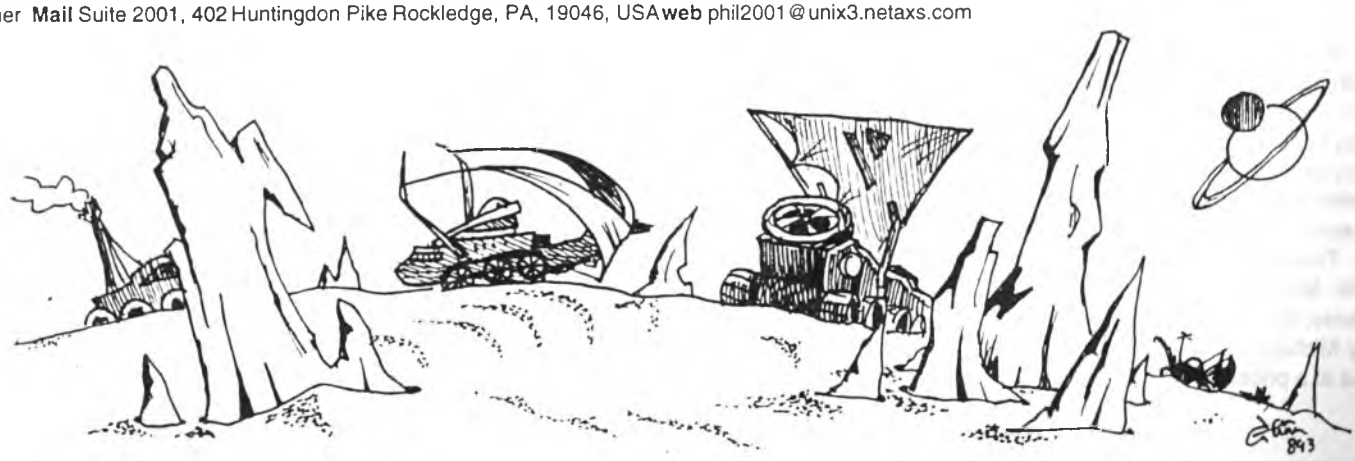
SWANCON 25 (Australian Natcon) April 20-24
Ascot Inn **GoHs** Commitments permitting - Simon Brown, Cathy Cupitt, Jack Dann, Stephen Dedman, Grant Morrison, Ian Nichols, Sean Williams, Tess Williams, Connie Willis. Dead - John W Campbell,Jr, Terry Nation

NOGESTOVONER CON King's Birthday weekend
Bentley's Hotel, St Andrew Street, Dunedin, New Zealand **Guests** Pauline B Nicholson, Pauline L Meinung **Rates** $NZ 20 **Mail** Box 333, Dunedin, NEW ZEALAND

CHICON 2000 (58th World Science Fiction Convention) August 31-September 4
Hyatt Regency, Chicago, Illinois **GoHs** Ben Bova, Bob Eggleton, Jim Baen, Bob and Anne Passovoy. Toastmaster: Harry Turtledove **Rates** $US135 for residents of North America, $US125 rate for bona fide residents of other continents **Mail** PO Box 642057, Chicago, IL, 60664, USA **Fax** 312-946-3779 **web** http://www.chicon.org/

2001 Conventions

THE MILLENIUM PHILCON (59th World Science Fiction Convention) August 30 - September 3
The Pennsylvania Convention Center & Philadelphia Marriott Hotel **GoHs** Greg Bear, Stephen Youll, Gardner Dozois, George Scithers. Toastmaster: Esther Friesner **Mail** Suite 2001, 402 Huntingdon Pike Rockledge, PA, 19046, USA **web** phil2001@unix3.netaxs.com



AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS

Number 85 January 1999

Edited by

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Victoria 3163

Alan Stewart
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SF&F Publishing and Book News

Last year Melbourne University Press published *The Australian Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy*, edited by Paul Collins. I think everyone will agree that it is if anything, a labor of love and I personally think that Paul and his associate editors should be praised for the effort they have put into this volume. Unfortunately it has come in for a bit of criticism because some of the entries are overdone or unmerited and others have been left out. So what! It is inevitable that people will find things wrong in a work such as this. I was a little put out myself that I personally did not receive an alphabetical listing, though I admittedly did receive several mentions in the booksellers and fandom sections. Maybe I am a bit soft about such things, but I think that we must make some allowance for personal bias. Paul has come in for a lot of criticism regarding his publishing ventures in the SF&F field over the years, but I believe that he should be given an A for effort, for having the nerve to go ahead and publish some original SF in this country and give authors a place to get started. This "holier than thou" attitude of some SF know it alls in Australia and elsewhere pisses me off and for my part they can go and pull their heads in!

Allen and Unwin publishers have let me down recently with new lists, but the April one is to hand with lots of new releases from Millennium announced. Firstly we have *Mammoth* by Stephen Baxter, a relatively new British author in the 90s, who has made a big impression with his hard SF tales such as *The Time Ships*, *Raft* and *Titan*. An April release in hard cover and tpb, book one of a series regarding the survival of a family of mammoths in today's world. Next up is the first in `The Secret Texts' series by Holly Lisle, *Diplomacy of Wolves*, which is an epic adventure set in a world of dark conspiracies and arcane sorceries. Also in hc and tpb. `The Sword of Truth' series by Terry Goodkind continues with the fifth volume titled *Soul of Fire*. The earler titles in the series are all out in pb now. A reprint series in pb, "SF Masterworks", sees *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson and the Hugo winning novel, *The Forever War* by Joe Haldeman, and we might expect that Millennium will publish the new title in this sequence, *Forever Peace*, which was released in the USA last year.

Pan MacMillan have one for Arthurian fans about two Roman citizens living in Britain who decide to stay in Britain rather than return to a Rome that is corrupt and now foreign to them, and they must face the chaos when the legions withdraw. In doing so they start a new culture and sow the seeds for the legend of Arthur and Camelot. Title, *The Skystone* by Jack Whyte, in pb for March.

Transworld have another Star Wars: Bounty Hunter Wars title, featuring Baba Fett, *Slave Ship*, which is book two in the series, by K W Jeter. Also in January we had *the Miracle Strain* by Michael Cordy, a pb dealing with the offer of life over death but at a price.

TRACI HARDING

HarperCollins have only told us about their paperback releases for January and February and the first of the half dozen is *Pilgrim*, which is part two of `The Wayfarer Redemption' by Sara Douglass, in which the Timekeeper Demons burst through the Star Gate and lay waste to the land. Popular American writer Greg Bear has picked a very popular subject, dinosaurs, and is carrying on where Sir Arthur Conan Doyle left off in *The Lost World*. A whole menagerie of animals presumably extinct since the Mesozoic age that have survived on the plateau of El Grande, Venezuela, are discovered again in *Dinosaur Summer*, a January pb. *Luthien's Gamble* by R A Salvatore is book two of the `Crimson Shadow' series, which is an heroic fantasy adventure in which our hero heads a rebellion against a dark Wizard-King. In *Moonfall* by Jack McDevitt, a comet is heading for a NASA base on the moon, which is the beginning of human activity there and that ain't all. The Moon will collide with Earth! Environmentalists will love Sheri Tepper's *The Family Tree*, a tale of time travel, murder and the revenge of Earth's trees which are becoming rampant and growing at an extraordinary rate as they reclaim the Earth. *Titan* by Stephen Baxter is a tale of near future space exploration and the triumph of a scientist over bureaucracy.

HarperCollins have a strong SF&F list for the coming months, with another `Krondor' title from Raymond Feist; *The Mad Ship* which is book two of Robin Hood's `The Liveship Traders' series; in April Kim Stanley Robinson has a collection of original stories titled *The Martians*; Janny Wurts' continuation of the `Alliance of Light' series, is a June release; and in July we will see *The Black Raven* by Katherine Kerr. There will be new fantasy tales from George R R Martin, R A Salvatore and Graham Edwards. Book three of `The Wayfarer Redemption' by Sara Douglass, *Crusader*, is due out in May, and Traci Harding's *Alchemist's Key* is also on the list, along with titles by Stephen Baxter, Jack McDevitt and Julian May.

Random House offer a new Anne Rice vampire tale in pb, *Pandora*, due out February.

Simon and Schuster tell us about children's author Colin Thompson, who is using the internet to publicise his SF book *Future Eden*. Set in the year 2287 it paints a picture of what life may be like then, with new species of animals replacing those that have become extinct, while evil forces are out to destroy the human race. Hardly a humorous scenario, but that is what it turns out to be. For kids and others that wish to catch up with him and his book, Mr Thompson's web site is http://www.futureeden.com. Star Trek: Voyager fans will get a kick out of Ethan Phillips and William J Birnes' *Star Trek Cookbook*, a tpb from Pocket/Simon & Schuster in February. In Star Trek pbs we have a new series featuring James Kirk, which goes right back to the beginning of the stories, in which the relationship of Kirk and Gary Mitchell comes into play. Michael J Friedman authors the first three, *My Brother's Keeper*, *Republic* and *Constitution*. Also in pb is *Place Among the Stars* and *The Women of Star Trek Voyager*, which is a collection of TV stories. For March in the Earthlight imprint we have a new edition of Ray Bradbury's SF classic, *Golden Apples of the Sun* and a dark fantasy novel of epic proportions, *The High House* by James Stoddard, which is his first novel. In March we see another new British author with *Green Rider* by Kristen Britain, which is an epic fantasy about a world on the brink of destruction and features a heroine who sets out with allies she meets to foil the evil that would destroy her land, tpb. More Star Trek trilogies! This time Deep Space 9, #s 24 and 25 in the series by Daffyd ab Hugh, titled `The Rebel's Trilogy'. It deals with the defence of DS9 against the Cardassians endeavoring to take control again.

Film Review February '99

Although the number of movies in the SF&F category being released now is if not prolific, it is a lot more than we are used to. Consequently it is getting hard to catch up with them all, particularly when they are not quite the type of story you are personally interested in, such as recent releases like *Blade* and *Dark City*, although I expect to catch up with the latter on video soon. One I could not possibly miss however was the latest "Star Trek" epic *Insurrection*.

It did not quite meet my expectations though it was quite good in comparison with a TV episode. I found *First Contact*, the previous "Star Trek" movie released, much more satisfying both story wise and visually. *Insurrection* is more like an extended episode, and in fact has some elements in common with a *ST:TNG* story titled "Who Watches The Watchers". The prime directive comes into prominence when it becomes necessary for the Enterprise to interfere with a society already under observation, but also under threat of annihilation, despite their very advanced knowledge. They choose to live with a simple life style which certain elements wish to destroy mainly for revenge. Picard is faced with the dilemma that he and other Star Fleet captains have faced and that is to go against the prime directive or not. As I have said, a good story in the typical Star Trek mould, but this movie, to use a much used description of many SF books these days, is not painted on the big canvas that we expect to see in SF movies now, Star Trek or otherwise.

Movie makers often seem to get the same ideas about what would make a good tale at about the same time. Case in point is two animated movies, *Antz* and *A Bug's Life*. I missed the first one, but we did catch up with the second one. A new animation process, which I presume is computer generated, leads to some of the most perfect animation I have seen and the tale about one young ant who must prove his worth to the rest of his nest is great. The story of how the young ant and his friends, who he enlists from a run-down flea circus, including a lady bird, a beetle, a dragon fly and other colorful characters and how they set out to protect the ant colony from marauding wasps, is inspired.

We expect to see the romantic fantasy movie *Practical Magic* next week. Hollywood has produced some memorable light fantasy pics in the past and this appears to be one to add to the list. The big one coming up though Is *Star Wars: Part One*, going way back to well before the time in which the three movies we have seen are set. The trailer we have seen certainly indicates that we are in for something very special in a couple of months. Nicole De Boer, who plays Dax in *ST:DS9* is starring in the cinema release *Cube*, and the Multiverse Convention organisers are holding a preview night at the Kino Cinemas on February 18th. As for the SF on TV situation, who knows when we will see *Babylon 5* back on channel 9. *ST:Voyager* is actually back on this week and only about two years behind US release, while the re-run of *ST:TNG* has left us having viewed the episode "Best of Both Worlds - Part 1" and God only knows when if ever they will screen part Two. I suggest you borrow the video or read the book.

Merv B

Local Releases

hc = hard cover pb = mass market paperback tpb = trade paperback
f = fantasy h = horror hm = humor j = juvenile nf = non-fiction
a = anthology c = collection n = novel sf = science fiction

December 1998

Ronan's Revenge	James Bibby	Orion	f-n	pb	$14.95
The Stainless Steel Rat	Harry Harrison	Orion	sf-n	pb	$12.95
The Stainless Steel Rat's Revenge	Harry Harrison	Orion	sf-n	pb	$12.95
The Stainless Steel Rat Goes to Hell	Harry Harrison	Millennium	sf-n	pb	$14.95
Battletech: Warrior 3 - Coupe	Michael A Stackpole	Roc (Penguin)	sf-n	pb	$12.95

January 1999

The Sleeper in the Sands	Tom Holland	Little Brown	f-n	tpb	$24.95

Febuary 1999

Shadowrun: The Terminus Experiment	Jonathan E Bond & Jak Koke	Roc (Penguin)	sf-n	pb	$13.95
Sensational Cyber Stories	Tony Bradman (ed)	Corgi	j-sf-a	pb	$14.95
Hercules: Labors of a Legendary Hero	Georges Moroz	Dell (Transworld)	j-f-c	pb	$ 9.95
Battletech: TotC VII - Prince of Havoc	Michael A Stackpole	Roc (Penguin)	sf-n	pb	$12.95
The Searchers 2: Empire of Dust	Chet Williamson	Avon (Transworld)	sf-n	pb	$14.95

March 1999

The Dilbert Future	Scott Adams	HarperCollins	hm	tpb	$18.95
Cosm	Gregory Benford	Orbit	sf-n	pb	$16.95
The Flying Sorcerers	Peter Haining (ed)	Orbit	f-a	pb	$16.95
The Mars Mystery	Graham Hancock	Michael Joseph	nf	tpb	$24.95
Liveship Traders 2: Mad Ship	Robin Hobb	HarperCollins	f-n	tpb	$24.95
Ship of Magic	Robin Hobb	HarperCollins	f-n	pb	$15.95
Sword of Shadows 1: Cavern of Black Ice	J V Jones	Orbit	f-n	tpb	$26.95
Nimisha's Ship	Anne McCaffrey	Bantam Press	sf-n	hc	$36.95
Dance of the Voodoo Handbag	Robert Rankin	Corgi	f-n	pb	$15.95
Winter of the World: Castle of the Winds	Michael Scott Rohan	Orbit	f-n	pb	$16.95
Eyes of Silver	Michael A Stackpole	Bantam Spectra	f-n	pb	$14.95
Battletech 43: Falcon Rising	Robert Thurston	Roc (Penguin)	sf-n	pb	$12.95

April 1999

Mammoth	Stephen Baxter	Millennium	f-n	tpb	$24.95
Fortress of Eagles	C J Cherryh	HarperCollins	f-n	pb	$13.95
Krondor: The Betrayal	Raymond E Feist	HarperCollins	f-n	tpb	$24.95
Sword of Truth 5: Soul of the Fire	Terry Goodkind	Millennium	f-n	hc	$36.95
The Forever War	Joe Haldeman	Millennium	sf-n	pb	$16.95
View From Mirror 3: Dark is the Moon	Ian Irvine	Penguin	f-n	pb	$16.95
Noir	K W Jeter	Millennium	sf-n	pb	$14.95
Into the Dark	Victor Kelleher	Viking	h-n	tpb	$24.95
Secret Texts 1: Diplomacy of Wolves	Holly Lisle	Millennium	f-n	tpb	$24.95
I Am Legend	Richard Matheson	Millennium	sf-n	pb	$16.95
The Flight of the Horse	Larry Niven	Orbit	sf-c	pb	$16.96
Martians	Kim Stanley Robinson	HarperCollins	f-c	tpb	$22.95
Fireflaught	A Whitmore	HarperCollins	f-n	pb	$14.95

May 1999

Crusader	Sara Douglass	HarperCollins	f-n	tpb	$24.95
Clash of Kings	George R R Martin	HarperCollins	f-n	pb	$15.95
Dragon King	R A Salvatore	HarperCollins	f-n	pb	$13.95
War In Heaven	David Zindell	HarperCollins	sf-n	pb	$15.95

June 1999

Traces	Stephen Baxter	HarperCollins	sf-c	pb	$14.95
The Alchemist's Key	Traci Harding	HarperCollins	f-n	pb	$14.95
Orion Arm	Julian May	HarperCollins	sf-n	tpb	$22.95
Perseus Spur	Julian May	HarperCollins	sf-n	pb	$14.95
Wars of Light and Shadow	Janny Wurts	HarperCollins	f-n	tpb	$22.95

Reviews

Donna Heenan reviews:

Ciara's Song by Andre Norton & Lyn McConchie

Aspect pb July 1998 245 pages $US 6.50
ISBN 0-446-60644-8

It is a time of dark terror, the land of Karsten lies in the grip of evil. The Duke of Kars would ensure his rule by ridding Karsten of witches, and so the edict has been spoken. "Kill all with Witch blood and take what they own."

Men of much greed and little honor seek out the witch blood or those for whom they hold a grudge, killing for money and land. Ciara is a child when this pogrom happens. The hunt soon threatens her family. As her father, mother and siblings are killed, the Lord Tarnoor risks his family's safety to take Ciara in and raise the child as one of their own.

Ciara grows strong and healthy in Lord Tarnoor's keeping. She rewards the old lord by marrying his son, Trovagh, becoming a source of strength and love for the family. Together they grow, have children and live well. Life is seldom lived completely in happiness, and Trovagh and Ciara receive much pain from their eldest child. A wilful, destructive boy, he matures to be an evil man. Together Ciara and Trovagh struggle to protect their grandchildren from his influence.

This charming tale speaks of Ciara's life from beginning to end. Her triumphs and troubles are laid out before us to read. (And if you lot ever start feeling sorry and miserable at what your children have done, thank your lucky stars you did not get Ciara's slimey eldest son!) So often we see part of a character's life, a short interlude that often leaves us wondering what happened next. Lyn McConchie has sated that curiosity with this book, telling us the entire tale of Ciara's life. One of my favorite formats for a story.

The other best thing about Ciara's Song - it is almost entirely Lyn McConchie's work. Lyn has borrowed the culture and background from Andre Norton, but the writing is all her own. She has stamped her personality across the book. Lyn's first witch world novel, *Key of the Keplian* was a damned good copy of a Norton book, but always the slight reminders that it was a copy. *Ciara's Song* gives us a good look at Lyn McConchie's creative talents and those talents are mighty fine!

Karen Pender-Gunn reviews:

Munching Maggots, Noah's Flood and TV Heart Attacks and other cataclysmic science moments (New Great Moments in Science)
by Dr Karl Kruszeinicki

HarperCollins tpb November 1998 189 pages $19.95
ISBN 0-7322-5858-8

Well, this book contains more about maggots than I ever wanted to know, thank you very much. This is a book to dip into, with its little boxes of information all over the pages and a nice, easy to read writing style. Dr Karl makes learning seem like fun, rather than a chore. This is the sort of book to take for an easy read on the train, or at the beach, so you can learn while relaxing. The very eclectic variety of subjects ensures that there should be something for everyone to enjoy. There is even some nice yucky bits for the teenager in your life to enjoy.

Lindsay Jamieson reviews:

Star Trek: New Frontier - The Captain's Table 5: Once Burned by Peter David

Pocket (S&S) pb October 1998
262 pages $11.95
ISBN 0-671-02078-1

Star Trek: The Captain's Table 6 - Where Sea Meets Sky
by Jerry Oltion

Pocket (S&S) pb October 1998
267 pages $11.95 ISBN 0-671-02400-0

The basic premise of "The Captain's Table" series is very similar to Spider Robinson's `Callahan's Crosstime Saloon' series. However, this particular bar is only patronised by leaders, chosen from throughout time-space. The narrator of *Once Burned* is Mackenzie Calhoun who is a fairly recent addition to the non-film Star Trek pantheon. As a young man leading a rebellion on his home planet he had his first brief encounter with The Captain's Table, a place that moves around like a Tardis, and his second longer encounter occurs whilst he is the captain of the Excalibur and this time he must pay the price for being an habitue of this establishment.

This price is to tell a story, and the story he tells is of when he was first officer aboard the Grissom. The Grissom's mission is to escort a diplomatic team to oversee peace talks between two races on two different worlds in the one stellar system. One of these races, the Carvargna is native to the second planet of the Anzibar system, the other race, the Dufaux, are interstellar refugees whom the Carvargna allowed to settle on their planet. The Dufaux are aggressive and pullulateous, and the resulting resource depletion causes warfare in which the Carvargna succeed in banishing the Dufaux to Anzibar IV.

The continuing harassment drives the Carvargna to approach the Federation for assistance. The Federation now makes a big mistake, as the team consists of two people related to each other, Byron Kenyon and Stephanie Kenyon. This mistake is further compounded into a blunder as the captain of the Grissom, Norman Kenyon, is respectively the brother and father of these two people. The captain is psychologically unstable and the results of the diplomatic team's efforts with the Dufaux drive him over the edge. I won't give away the rest of the story except to say that this is above the low standard of much recent *Star Trek* fiction.

Where Sea Meets Sky is a story of when Christopher Pike was captain of the Enterprise. The Aronnians have biological spaceships called titans, and most of them have disappeared to the Devernia system, and as members of the Federation the Aronnians have called for Federation assistance which has arrived in the form of the Enterprise. Pike investigates the mystery, heading to Devernia and other systems, and also uncovering secrets the Aronnians foolishly thought they could keep, and after quite an adventure resolves the situation.

Whilst telling his story at The Captain's Table he has a fair bit of interaction with his listeners interspersed throughout his story, one of whom turns out to be a famous nineteenth century author. The nature of the listeners brings up a problem with the framing premise, that of interference with normal history, which is basically ignored as an issue in these books. Again, the standard of this novel compares favorably when contrasted with much recent *Star Trek* fiction.

Alan Stewart reviews:

Traces

by Stephen Baxter

Voyager
hc July 1998
359 pages $22.95 tpb

Stephen Baxter's second collection provides twenty-one selections which cover a wide variety of times and places. (His earlier *Vacuum Diagrams* specifically collected all his `Xeelee' short works). The copyright page lists original publication dates from 1988 to 1996, and publications such as *Interzone*, *Asimov's SF*, *Science Fiction Age* and three UK original anthologies.

Basically all hard SF tales, these include `what if?' alternate histories set in the past - such as "Mittelwelt" where Germany won World War I, and "Brigantia's Angels" where heavier than air flight was achieved in Wales. Baxter's extrapolations also range to the far future, with "George and the Comet" and "Inherit the Earth", both wild possibilities.

Quite a few of these tales are off-shoots of Baxter's other works, or first adventures in a universe he subsequently used for novels. Recommended to hard SF and Stephen Baxter fans.

Alan Stewart reviews:

Earth Made of Glass by John Barnes

Orion tpb October 1998 416 pages $22.95
ISBN 1-85798-466-8

It's the issue with the strange back jacket blurb...(see *Ansible* 138), but is in fact a sequel to *A Million Open Doors*. Giraut and Margaret Leones are sent as diplomatic agents to the planet Briand, where very limited terraformed areas support populations based on literary cultures of Tamil Mandalam and Kintulum (Mayan) settled in the twenty-fifth century. A volcanic disaster has forced them to live closer than they'd like, and the Council of Humanity has diplomats trying to introduce their `springer' technology without disrupting the local culture too much. Can a peaceful solution be found?

With his Thousand Culture background, and springer technology, Barnes has quite a bit of the galaxy to play in, but here he concentrates on one time, and one place. It's a future where many things are possible, including the founding of settlements based on literary archetypes. that the consequences of such things may be a problem forms the basis of this novel. It's all very well to try somethings, but maybe they haven't been done in the past for good reasons.

This is not an easy novel to read. Both the plotting and events hit the reader hard. There may be no right answers, people's lives are in the balance, and the reader just doesn't know how it's going to pan out. The set up is intriguing, and it's an interesting thought experiment of what could happen in our far future. Recommended.

Ian Mond reviews:

Dark Terrors 4 edited by Stephen Jones & David Sutton

Gollancz hc November 1998 349 pages $39.95
ISBN 0-575-06581-8

I'm not sure why, but Jones and Sutton begin the Introduction to *Dark Terrors 4* by explaining the problems with editing an anthology. Although they mention the valid point that one cannot satisfy all tastes, one gets the strange feeling that Sutton and Jones are not confident with the stories within the collection. Of course, I daresay this is not the case, especially when you consider the stellar cast of writers including Christopher Fowler, Neil Gaiman, Dennis Etchison and Poppy Z Brite.

While most of the collection is good, there are four stories that deserve to be mentioned. Neil Gaiman's "The Wedding Present", is a beautiful tale about a couple who find a wedding present with strange magical properties. Written as a modern fable, Gaiman expertly describes how the wedding present affects the couple's lives. Furthermore, while it describes twenty years of marriage, the story is not very long. It does not have to be. Gaiman understands how to engage the reader's interests, and make the reader care for the characters in an economy of words.

One of the masters of quiet, creeping horror, Dennis Etchison, delivers the disturbing "Inside the Cackle Factory". Etchison tells a story of Lisa who works for a market research company attempting to gauge the weakness and strengths of sitcom pilots. Without giving too much away, Etchison speculates about what happens to those writers who create pilots that never succeed, especially writers who have had plenty of money invested into their talents and projects by greedy Hollywood execs who are always looking for that special sitcom. While a wonderful insight into how Hollywood calculates the sitcoms that might be popular, the conclusions that Etchison draws - though hopefully fanciful - are very disturbing, especially for those people who have considered writing a sitcom or perhaps creating their own science fiction series.

One of the most underrated writers in the horror field today, Jay Russell, produces the superb (I'm running out of superlatives) "Sullivan's Travels". Describing the continuing exploits of Marty Burns (part LA actor, part detective, who can be found in Russell's "Celestial Dogs" and "Burning Bright"), Russell tells the story of an aged Hollywood extra who is besieged by more then one famous ghost. Fast paced and entertaining, Russell's story is inventive and amazingly *heartwarming. The* type of story that makes you laugh and cry and shudder, all at once.

Finally, the always consistent Michael Marshall Smith writes the wonderful "A Place to Stay". This fine writer always makes me jealous with the way he gently leads the reader into the story from the first line. Set in New Orleans, "A Place to Stay", starting with the line "John, do you believe in vampires," tells the story of John the computer programmer and his strange relationship with Rita-May. Although the ending is a little too ambiguous, Smith somehow splices together time travel of a sorts with the New Orleans culture as John finds himself jumping between a particular twelve hour period. Personally, I believe this story should have ended the collection.

Thomas Tessier, Poppy Z Brite, Lisa Tuttle, Christopher Fowler and Richard Christian Matheson, also turn out good stories. Of the five, it is worth mentioning that the Matheson, which is probably too short (like most of his work) to be really enjoyable, as usual throws an effective punch. Also worth

mentioning is Lisa Tuttle's "My Pathology" which combines a good mixture of the bizarre, the creepy and the outright scary. While I have only read some of Tuttle's work, I believe this is the best and most coherent of her stories.

Of course, *Dark Terrors 4* doesn't escape the usual batch of terrible stories. The worst of the bunch is Joel Lane's pretentious and rambling "The Country of Glass" and the incoherent and strange "Weak End" (the title says more then intended) by James Miller. While I had no time for these stories, I am certain that there are some people who will find them perceptive and clever.

On the whole, *Dark Terrors 4* is a good collection. While most of the stories are average, there is enough great stuff here to keep the reader engaged. One disappointing element, is that I didn't notice many new names. In a narrowing genre, horror is failing to produce new talent; repeatedly looking at its veterans and experience campaigners to keep the industry afloat. Still, this is not the fault of Jones and Sutton, who have edited a good collection of stories.

Beverley Hope reviews:

The Faerie Kingdom - An Anthology of Faeries, Goblins and Elves

by Celia Haddon

Simon & Schuster
hc November 1998
106 pages $19.95
ISBN 0-684-84066-9

In *The Faerie Kingdom*, Celia Haddon has collected together some truly fascinating writings about faeries, elves and goblins from as early as the twelfth century. This collection is ordered in a logical sequence so that the book reads well as a whole. Ms Haddon has included writers such as William Shakespeare, John Aubrey, Mrs. Bray, and Robert Burton as well as many others.

Some of the snippets of information include that faeries were not always perceived to have wings, rather that "the older stories make it clear that faeries can whirl about in the air without them." Further, faeries seem to have varied in size, from smaller than humans to human in size, such as the faerie queen in *Thomas the Rhymer*.

In addition to the fabulous descriptions about faeries and their like, Ms Haddon has included some fascinating paintings and drawings by a great number of artists, but especially the nineteenth century artists who were so fond of the land of faeires. Some of the paintings are positively stunning, and I found myself often stopping what I was reading to contemplate the beauty of these paintings.

For anyone who has even the slightest interest in faeries and their worlds, this a glorious, informative book, full of fabulous illustrations, marvelous prose and just the right element of history. I would recommend this book highly to any fans of faeries, especially if they are planning to write a fantasy novel.

Edward McArdle reviews:

Guilty Pleasures; **The Laughing Corpse**; **Circus of the Damned**; **The Lunatic Cafe** (Anita Blake series)
by Laurell K Hamilton

It may be superfluous to review these books, since everyone I speak to is already reading them. In the Buffy the Vampire Slayer newsgroup, articles compare Buffy and Anita Blake. (Buffy kills giant insects, vampires, etc. Anita kills everybody.) There are presently eight books in the series, and they do need to be read in order. The others are *Bloody Bones*, *The Killing Dance*, *Burnt Offerings* and *Blue Moon*. But I haven't read those yet. My sister says the books are basically romances, but I can't see that. They are more like the Indiana Jones movies, where the action starts with the first frame, and every now and then you need to pause to breathe. (Easier in a book. You close it for a while.)

The world is one where vampires, werewolves, zombies, etc., are real. Anita Blake is a person with the ability to raise zombies - an animator. She does this professionally. If your husband died without leaving a will resurrect him briefly and ask questions (with a lawyer present, of course). She also used to kill vampires, but now that vampires have been granted citizenship one can't do that unless the vampire has been convicted of murder. She is, however, the state's official vampire executioner. Anita believes there is no such thing as a non-evil vampire. This becomes complicated by her involvement with one of the master vampires. This is where the romance supposedly comes in. My old-fashioned view is that romance should involve some emotional attachment other than lust, which makes this involvement hard to accept. Vampires are dead. They have no souls. She becomes involved with other men later in the series, and the romance angle takes flight in the fourth book, when she is fought over (in fairly gentlemanly fashion) by a vampire and an alpha werewolf.

Personally, I find the romance a little harder to believe than the zombies. Anita has an extremely abrasive personality, and mentions at times that she has never been chased by men. (Well, after she garrotted them, she probably forgot them.) Why would the two Masters of the City be fighting over her? Anita also has a friend who is a psychopathic killer. Apart from the rollicking action, which barely slows, the books are extremely bloodthirsty and gruesome. Book 3 and 4 are not as bad as the previous two, but none of these books is for the squeamish.

Karen Pender-Gunn reviews:

Fat Boy saves the World by Ian Bone

Lothian tpb September 1998 208 pages $12.95
ISBN 0-85091-938-X

Its odd that a publication like *Thyme* - primarily a science fiction news zine - should get copies of teenage novels to review. But what the heck, someone has to do it. This one, has to be the weirdest teenage novel I have ever read. I'm not really sure what happened in the story and I'm not really sure if it had a happy ending. Maybe that's science fiction enough. This was one of those novels which produced puzzlement on completion of reading rather than any sense of enjoying the story. It was just too weird for me. Not for everyone's taste and I would suggest you know your teenager well before giving them this book. Talk about dysfunctional characters!

Merv Binns reviews:

Star Trek: Voyager 16 - Seven of Nine

by Christie Golden

Pocket (S&S)
pb October 1998
$11.95
ISBN 0-671-02491-4

The great thing about science fiction is the ideas and concepts that writers come up with. The *Star Trek* series has always been a fine example of that. The "what if " concept is a prime factor in the stories. What if we could travel faster than light, what if we could build an artifical man or half man half robot and the results of these things happening in the stories is the strongest aspect of their appeal to me. Authors in SF generally have labored forever to invent believable aliens and few have really succeeded, with *Star Trek* being one of its biggest failures. They all look like humans with some variations. However, one of the series' best ideas is the Borg.

Being humanoid with various gadgetry connected they are reasonably believable, but in this story we discover that many different alien races have been absorbed by the Borg hive mentality. As I am sure you well know we are years behind in viewing the "Voyager" series, but I was lent a video featuring a Borg who was originally a human female and has been rescued by Voyager, titled "Seven of Nine" which is her Borg designation. In the TV/video episodes the tale as to how they "rescued" her was related and now in this novel we find her still trying to come to terms with her human self. Haunted by the various alien personalities in her memory, whose memories are part of her Borg experience, she relives these memories in violent dreams which almost lead to her death. By the end of this novel, however, she has come to terms with the problem and has remembered her own human experience.

While this has been happening a rather confusing tale is enfolding concerning a group of aliens who have found themselves under the protection of Captain Janeway and her crew, and are endeavoring to conceal their telepathic abilities. This group are the last of their race, all the rest having been wiped out by a very nasty insectoid race called the Ku. As a mercenary lot who will wipe out any humanoid people just for their enjoyment, they were enlisted by a megalomaniac emperor to destroy the telepathic Skedans and the group Voyager have rescued are out to destroy the emperor of the Lhiaarians, with the unwitting help of Captain Janeway and her crew.

Seven of Nine, however, mainly because of the Skedan memories of those she had absorbed into the Borg mind, finally gets it all together and despite the Skedans' efforts to control her thoughts and make her do what they want, helps save the day. The Skedans and the Lhiaarians both come out winners in the final denouement. Seven of Nine will no doubt from now on be a regular part of the Voyager story lines. It would be nice if we could actually see some of the episodes.

Alan Stewart reviews:

Hot Blood X Edited by Jeff Gelb & Michael Garrett

Pocket (S&S) pb November 1998 $335 pages $12.95
ISBN 0-671-00950-8

After only four years, the `Hot Blood' series is already up to volume ten! This volume contains sixteen original stories, and a Ramsay Campbell reprint ("The Seductress"). There are two collaborations, and each of the editors has a story included. Apart from Campbell, the only other names recognisable to this reader were Melanie Tem and Graham Masterton.

None of the stories were particularly memorable, and the whole collection has a decidedly `southern' feel to it. There's more emphasis on the horror side of things, with some nods to the erotic. Pretty similar to earlier volumes in the series, and if you liked those you'll probably enjoy this volume.

Robert Jan reviews:

Vampire$ by John Steakley

Signet (Penguin) pb 1997 357 pages $13.95
ISBN 0-45-145562-2

I hope director John Carpenter does this excellent novel justice in his upcoming film adaptation! Because the book, at least, deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as Barbara Hambly's *Immortal Blood* and *Traveling With the Dead* and ranks alongside Richard Matheson's classic *I Am Legend*. John Steakley is not a prolific author. *Vampire$* first saw print in 1990 and his only other novel, *Armor* (US spelling), was published in 1984. The latter was a traumatic story of power armored soldiers fighting an unwinnable future war against relentless insectoid aliens. Representing the leading edge of the military SF genre, and comparable to Grandmaster Heinlein's powerful, *Starship Troopers* (the book, not that abomination of a film!), it was even more cynical than Joe Haldeman's gritty *Forever War*. Two of *Armor's* mainstays were the characters Jack Crow and Felix. Steakley implies a kind of mythic resonance by lifting the same names for the contemporary setting of *Vampire$*. Readers tempted to make too much of this should see the author's note on the title page. It reads, "This Felix is no other Felix. This Jack Crow is no other Jack Crow."

In the 20th century, Jack Crow leads Team Crow, the Vatican's elite vampire hunting squad. Team Crow are **modern** 'fearless' vampire killers, deploying all kinds of hi-tech gadgets including: kevlar chainmail, crosses blazing with halogen lights, enhanced crossbows, phosphorous flares, plastic explosive and, eventually, guns that crank out blessed silver bullets. Much of the night stalking operations take place in small town USA and have the same unsettling air of horror-made-commonplace that characterizes Ray Bradbury and (again) Matheson horror stories. Dynamiting vampire 'nests' in daylight is the name of the game. When the sunlight weakened bloodsuckers emerge from the rubble, Team Crow terminates them with extreme prejudice. Bear in mind that Steakley's monsters (and I use the word with precision) are **not** dapper nobility that dally away immortality keeping cats, collecting artwork and agonizing about drinking human blood. They're supernaturally strong, totally ruthless elemental forces. Human beings are less than cattle to them.

Steakley vividly creates a magnificently harrowing tale of men and women who are the proverbial Forlorn Hope. The covert war they wage oscillates between blindingly fast, razor fanged moments of sheer terror and epic, hard partying binges after they've stood down. Except, of course, that there never can be a true respite in this most desperate of combat zones. Larger-than-death heroes, irredeemably cruel foes that are the fantasy equivalents of Giger's *Aliens*, and fathomlessly dark humor amidst pathos laden tragedy. *Vampire$* has it all. Even David Drake, who surely knows a thing or two about mixed-genre adventure thrillers (witness *Killer*, *From The Heart Of Darkness*, *Vettius And His Friends*, etc) couldn't have done it better. This is the most terrifying vampire stake-out ever.

Sue Bursztynski reviews:

Warlord Chronicles 3: Excalibur by Bernard Cornwell

Penguin pb October 1998 480 pages $16.95
ISBN 0-14-023287-7

I keep looking for the ideal Arthurian novel. I haven't found it yet, but I do have a group of favorites - Rosemary Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset;* Mary Stewart's Merlin novels; Parke Godwin's *Firelord*; T H White's *Once and Future King* and now this trilogy.

You have to have read the first two novels to make sense of this one, because it's really one long novel in three volumes. In case you have missed out, here's the basic outline: Arthur is Uther's illegitimate son, so can't be king and refuses to take the throne from his awful nephew (not son in this universe) Mordred because he promised to support him. Merlin is a Druid. Nimue, far from being the pretty young thing who locked him in a tree, is a loony priestess who works with him because she needs his knowledge, and what she ends up doing to him is a lot worse than the tree! The Christians are constantly plotting against Arthur and Lancelot, the (Christian) villain of this series, had gone over to the Saxons in his eagerness to rule. He's not actually much of a warrior, he had to pay the poets to sing of him, but he is good-looking, which helps him. Guinevere is a gutsy lady, but she wants to be Queen and Arthur, whom she genuinely loves, won't oblige, so...

Excalibur opens about a year after the second novel, *Enemy of God*. Arthur has locked up Guinevere at Glastonbury after catching her at it in the Temple of Isis. The Saxons are restless. The Christians are plotting, as usual. Merlin is about to perform *the* ceremony that will bring back the gods to Britain. Unfortunately, it involves some human sacrifice - Arthur's son, Gwydre - and naturally, Arthur objects, ruining the ceremony and getting the pagans offside, so now he's offended everybody! Luckily, his major triumph, the Battle of Badon, is still ahead of him. But Mordred is not quite out of the picture...

There are so many different versions of the Arthurian story, these days; half the fun is seeing what each individual writer will do with it. In this series, you get both characterisation and storyline; not every writer can do that. The battle scenes are good, too, and the author doesn't go easy on you - the bloodletting is graphic! He also is aware that the average "army" in those days would have been a couple of hundred men (two Saxon armies, adding up to two thousand, are massive) - there are no epic battles with entire legions fighting thousands of spear-waving barbarians.

This novel, and the two before it, will make a fine addition to the shelves of any Arthurian fan.

FILM INDEX #41 ISBN 0 949149 20 9

MELBOURNE
Goes to the Movies

by John Howard Reid

John Tipper reviews:

Melbourne Goes to The Movies Film Index #41
written and published by John Howard Reid

26 Casey Drive, Wyong, NSW, 2259, 200 pages, softcover,
ISBN 0-949149-20-9
Write for a price list of this and previous issues.

Film Index is a series of (usually) 200 page books featuring movies fondly remembered from the 1930-1970 period. Each is on a theme. This title seemed appropriate for the readers of *Thyme*. It includes a look at what Melbourne filmgoers were watching over the selected four decades, and what movies interest her current film buffs from that period. John's introduction tells you what was popular in Melbourne in 1936, 1945, 1955, 1960 and 1970.

Does it surprise you that Melbourne had 402,465 TV sets at the end of July, 1961? Or that St Kilda with 4 cinemas in 1955 could muster 7,947 theatre seats? By 1960, suburban cinemas had dropped from 127 to 67, seating capacity from 131,771 to 69,986. These are only facts and figures. You'll find more than 120 movies of the mostly less famous variety reviewed, accompanied by full production details and anecdotes, quotes and the by now famous cartoon reviews. Each review is accompanied by a little figure clapping, laughing or holding fingers to nose. Handy if the subject movie is on TV and you want a quick opinion.

There aren't only movies, of course. Warner Brothers cartoons and Three Stooges shorts are also included, as well as many illustrations of actors and posters. Highly recommended.

Karen Pender-Gunn reviews:

Carpe Jugulum

by Terry Practhett

Doubleday
hc December 1998
285 pages $36.95
ISBN 0-385-40992-3

I might as well offend some more readers here and not praise to the skies this new Pratchett book. While looking through Ian's video list recently, I came across a title of a video called "Star Trek: oh, so tired". Maybe this sentiment is starting to apply to Discworld books (you can start throwing those stones now). It's a book with the witches in it, including the well-upholstered Agnus Nit. And the witches behave in the same way they always behave. Magrat now has a baby, and we know she has a streak of resistance in her from previous books, and out it comes again. There are vampires and they don't behave like the "traditional" vampires, are you surprised by this, no, I didn't think so. So we know what to expect from the characters and lo and behold, they live up to our expectations.

Now, I'm not saying this isn't a good book to read and is entertaining. I'm just saying the surprise is gone, and these well-worn characters are as comfortable to slip into as a pair of old slippers. Comfortable and safe, that's what this book is. You can stop throwing stones now, I'm finished.

Edward McArdle reviews:

Primary Inversion by Catherine Asaro.

One needs a reason to pick out a novel from the hundreds about. I picked up this one because Catherine Asaro was on a couple of panels I attended at the Worldcon, and she sounded intelligent and interesting. I looked out for books by her for a while, but could not find any until recently. Rather interestingly, apart from the puffs from Science Fiction magazines, there was one from the *Romantic Times*. And the book is a romance. The heroine meets her soulmate early in the piece, just after she has agreed to marry someone else she loves. In a reversal of the norm (and no doubt because the author is a woman) all of her romantic attachments during the book are severely younger than she. But the book is very good science fiction, too.

The heroine is one of a group of Jagernauts, cybernetically enhanced pilots, and she is next in line to the throne of her empire. During the book she may come to realise her side may be the Good Guys, but only relative to the Bad Guys, who are bad indeed. The neutral planets don't like her side either. Her half-brother, the Imperator, is something of a bad guy too. The book is divided into three books, and each is a separate episode. In the first she and her squad encounter the enemy, and flee. In the second, she recuperates on a neutral planet. In the third she revolts.

The book does come to an end, but her three subsequent novels are set in the same universe, so perhaps the story continues. I enjoyed this a lot, and will be reading the others in the series.

Robert Jan reviews: **Titan** by Stephen Baxter

Voyager pb February 1999 581 pages $14.95
ISBN 0-00-649811-6

In 2004 space is no longer the final frontier and the world is going through one of its frighteningly periodic failures of vision. When the 143rd space shuttle mission, flown by Columbia, comes apart in a `Challenger' disaster NASA is ordered to expend its remaining shuttle technology and abandon non-military manned spaceflight. Enter Paula Benacerraf, grandmother and hard charging astronaut who wants a **real** mission, as opposed to just overseeing the dismantling of the shuttle fleet. Clutching at the straw of tantalizing evidence of possible life on Saturn's largest moon she becomes one of the movers and shakers of a gloriously jury-rigged, barnstorming plan: Titan or bust! It's a mission characterized by techno-cannibalism as ancient Apollo hardware, shuttles, and the biggest rocket booster ever are bashed and gaffer taped together in best Heinleinesque engineering sleight-of-hand tradition. Not that Baxter in any way glosses over the cruel, mind-numbing practicalities of the mission; this is no milkrun, routine voyage, but perhaps the most grueling trial of all history.

Baxter is often compared to Heinlein, and indeed Arthur C Clarke, for the grand scope of his ideas and his ability to convey the romance of engineering/science applications without neglecting the complex ethical paradoxes created. Additionally, I feel that he matches John Varley's sneaky satirical bent, and Larry Niven's knack for creating interesting, large casts of fascinating characters. Sorry, I'm making Baxter sound like some cobbled together science experiment himself!

Stylistically, Baxter delivers complex concepts as neatly packaged prose which, for all its economy, still conveys a sense of lyricism. This is an unexpected quality in a novel chronicling a desperate struggle across the flow of the depressing slide into the New Dark Ages. The United States which serves as the launching pad for *Titan* is introspectively despotic. Baxter conjures up the plausible nightmare of a fundamentalist American theocracy wielding corruptly righteous power in the name of anti-science, religious orthodoxy. Aristotelian physics are taught in schools and astrology books are routinely shelved under 'Science'! The Internet has been shut down except for *Disney-Coke* and other officially licensed sites. The madness is global and the Chinese, driven to the edge by environmental collapse, come up with an astonishingly bad idea to hammer their enemies, ironically at a time when the latter are no longer really ideologically remote from their national mindset. The writer squares off against some big ideas but is sophisticated enough to carry the load. Some mainstream critics dismiss SF as being escapist; but then they tend to say that about any form of entertainment that actually delivers the goods. Well, this is the kind of uncompromising book that makes escape look like a damn fine option! This dire landscape is illuminated by the soaring aspirations of the heroine and her fellow travelers. Not that Baxter is all big-ticket contrasts. Some of his speculation about the future is just plain mischievous and drolly reflects the present. "Softscreens", ultra-thin flexible computer screens cover walls, are used as neck-ties, glasses and full suits of clothes; resulting in startling social changes at all levels. There is a quaint *Star Trek* reference and a casual mention of an ice dance version of *X-Files*. Bill Gates has, perhaps, been prophetically deposed from Microsoft and there is a hilariously sickening view of a modern art scene whose practitioners use their teeth to sculpt statutes from animal fats and other tasty materials.

Caveats? Few and far between. The upbeat conclusion (there, you can read the book safe in the fuzzy knowledge that you'll get a **kind** of a happy ending!) serves as an undeservedly optimistic coda to Mankind's civilization, and perhaps helped make the book more marketable. As a dogged "glass-is-half-full-not-half-empty" fool I prefer the first explanation. As a minor point, courtesy of a space-struck childhood, I coped well with the many NASA acronyms scattered throughout the book but think that a brief glossary of terms might be useful for general readers. I also would have loved to see a detailed painting of the patchwork spaceship on the front cover!

This book is close to 600 pages long, and I read it hard on the heels of Baxter's philosophically similar *Voyage.* Nevertheless, this singleton tale steps out at a pace that puts to shame writers of doorstop fiction that don't go anywhere over the course of a **trilogy**. I've turned too many pages to honestly pick out one book as being "my favorite read", let alone be pompous enough to try for "the best book ever!" I can record that this beautifully crafted novel encapsulates what I think are the defining attributes of the science fiction genre. It's as characteristic a messenger as the brave little ship they send to *Titan.*

Robert Jan reviews:

The Shift

by George Foy

Bantam pb August 1997
519 pages $14.95
ISBN 0-553-50611-0

I was so impressed by George Foy's energetic cyberpunk/smuggling novel *Contraband* that I immediately went back and reread his earlier novel, *The Shift.*

Television writer Alex Munn is a different kind of character to *Contraband's* capable pilot hero. Outside of the production studio Alex is more of a floundering "Everyman", who, in spite of some martial arts training, has a hard time coping with the unfriendly types wanting to introduce him to the business ends of Tech-9 machine pistols and razor bladed carpet cutters.

Munn is the scriptwriter for the dreadful *Real Life* virtual reality show, bleeding edge interactive television that promises to revolutionize the jaded industry. Meanwhile, he's been feeding *his* artistic soul with *Munn's World*, a hyper detailed VR simulation of mid-19th century New York. Both cyberspace constructions are critical to the solution of this satisfying techno thriller, and contrast well with Foy's equally gritty realization of contemporary New York. It's not **all** contrasts; a fair chunk of the novel is set in the Riker's Island prison complex, which proves to be just as dangerous a place as the serial killer haunted slums of *Olde New York.*

The writer easily slips between realities like a smooth gear change. Who is trying to discredit and kill Munn, why, and what the hell can he do about it? Foy zaps these dusty plot elements and charges them with all of his considerable stylistic powers. Amidst the mean streeted action he'll draw down a sentence that's bitingly evocative, that's so elegantly constructed that it drags your eyes back to savor it again. Sometimes, it's the context as much as the content that highlights as when Alex reflects, after a bout of not-at-all-gratuitous lovemaking: "The secret of softness is, and must be, that hardness is evoked by it." One of the perks of reviewing is that now and then you stumble across an author who you know will continue to provide great reads. George Foy is one whose name I'll be happily adding to my list.

The Shift is set in the same near future era as *Contraband* and the natural thought is that they'd make a terrific movie series. Of course, there's no guarantee Foy's work would weather the translation, so maybe you had better read 'em now before some ham fisted director mucks up!

Damien Saunders reviews:

Splashdance Silver

by Tansy Rayner Roberts

Bantam
pb September 1998
386 pages $14.95
ISBN 0-733-80184-6

(originally published in
Ethel the Aardvark #81)

This is the first book by an Australian author. This is a comic fantasy about treasure, pirates, witches, politics and their inter-relation in this story.

The novel has a lot of very original ideas. The phrasing is quite enjoyable and easy to read. The main characters are set up in such a way to make them very believable and you react to them as the author wishes you to.

I can heartily recommend this book to anyone who enjoys this style as I enjoyed it to such an extent that I stayed up to silly hours of the morning to finish it.

Alan Stewart reviews:

Moonfall

by Jack McDevitt

Harper Collins tpb
February 1999
$22.95

Possibly Mcdevitt's longest novel to date, and the one he's tried to pack the most into. A comet (?) is destined to impact on the moon, and it looks like chunks from that collision will hit Earth. Just how much, how large and what damage will be done is explained through the course of the novel. Meanwhile we have scientists trying to gather data and calculate what will happen; a fleet of space planes trying to evacuate the Moon colony; various people sitting/travelling/getting trapped on Earth as cosmic debris falls. And the US Vice President ends up on the last ditch rescue ship from the Moon...

It's an interesting idea with action and excitement to keep you reading, but McDevitt tries a bit too hard. The reader doesn't really need all the extraneous detail of what's happening to X on the ground, they'll assume that anyway. If the novel had concentrated more on the life-and-death Vice Presidential flight, and the other problems in orbit, it would have been a tauter read.

A good block-buster, but not quite in the bestseller league.

Robert Jan reviews:

Paint Your Dragon by Tom Holt

Orbit pb 1997 311 pages $14.95 ISBN 1-85723-456-1

Another day, another dragon. *Sigh* This particular burnt offering is one more of Tom Holt's groaningly titled gems which sticks faithfully to his well established comic fantasy formula.

Take one slightly dotty human, in the form of gobstoppingly talented sculptress Bianca Wilson, add two supernatural protagonists, St. George and **that** dragon attempting the rematch of all time, throw in a bus load of holidaying demons, add salt for taste. Stir well. God forbid that I should threaten the reader with the icky details of the resulting alleged plot! Well, suffice to say that it contains elements that may, or may not, resemble runaway nuclear reactors, some devils called Prodsnap, Slitgrind and Chardonay (who could make it Big Time if they formed a law firm), and the Special Art Service. The last is a particularly silly outfit of Armani jumpsuited, Gucci balaclavaed, bazooka aiming commandos whose dangerous duty it is to, er, **bust** rampaging statues.

As quirkily enjoyable as ever this farce is Tom Holt entering with Dragon. Enter at **your** own risk!

James Allen reviews:

Babylon 5: Dark Genesis
- The Birth of the Psi Corps

by J Gregory Keyes
(based on an original outline
by J Michael Straczynski)

Boxtree (Macmillan)
pb December 1998
267 pages $15.95
ISBN 0-7522-2112-4

Consider a tie-in book set from 2115 AD to 2189 AD in the Babylon 5 universe. The TV series begins in 2257 AD, so from that standpoint all of this book is history. No doubt the two further books of this "epic trilogy" will fit between 2189 and 2257. We are familiar with Psi Corps on Babylon 5 as a fully fledged organization of telepaths. This book begins before all that and tells the first part of the story of how Psi Corps came about. There is only one character in this book that we have seen in the TV series but here Al Bester is a baby. (Yes he was once a child, perhaps even an innocent one!) I loved the fact that one character, Natasha Alexander, was reading a book which is obviously *The Demolished Man*. Judging by what the unnamed aliens (Vorlons) say to her, she probably is Lyta Alexander's mother. "IT WILL BE YOU, IF THE DARKNESS COMES SOON, the light said, OR ONE IN YOUR LINE, IF THE DARKNESS COMES LATER". A neat piece connecting the book to the TV series' continuity and helping explain Lyta Alexanders determination to go to Vorlon Space.

The book begins with a prologue telling of the first scientific research to prove the existence of telepaths. Events then move to the political sphere and the story goes on carried by characters, each with their own agenda, as the sure knowledge of existence of telepaths changes human society on Earth.

Towards the end of the book first extraterrestrial contact with the Centauri also happens. A very busy time. This is another of the Babylon 5 related products that I suspect is to be considered part of the "canon". If so it answers various questions and shows the Psi Corps and the underground resistance of telepaths as being more like two sides of the same coin. It is interesting how telepaths change so many things on Earth. Some things remain however, such as the quote from my favorite newspaper the *Weekly World News* from 15th of June 2117 on page 44. It is a sensationalized tabloid news item naturally. I wonder if *WWN* will last till 2117? This is a good book, told in three historic episodes, in a completely different authorial "voice" to J Michael Straczynski. That is one thing that really stands out. Recommended, especially for Babylon 5 fans, for whom it will fill some gaps.

Sue Burszynstki reviews:

The Celtic Crusades 1:
Iron Lance
by Stephen Lawhead

Voyager
tpb January 1999 $22.95
ISBN 0-00-224703-8

The iron lance of the title is the spear of Longinus, Christianity's second-holiest relic, after the Holy Grail and, according to this novel, in the care of a secret society more-or-less under the guidance of St. Andrew, who makes the occasional appearance in the story. It opens in Victorian-era Scotland, with a lawyer, Gordon Murray, being initiated into the highest level and seeing visions which turn out to be the story of the lance's travels during the Crusade era.

In 11th century Scotland, Orkney Islander Murdo, too young to take the cross, has to go anyway, to find his father and brothers when their farm is handed to a king's man, due to the scheming of the local abbot. Along the way, he has various adventures in the company of a Norse ship's crew (they're in it for the plunder) and three batty but likable monks who are early members of the above mentioned society (not especially secret in the Middle Ages, though not popular). He sees with horror the slaughter of Jerusalem's population, encounters the good saint and rescues the holy relic from those who would misuse it. All in a day's work!

This is essentially beach reading, switch-off-your-brain and suspend-disbelief. You'll probably enjoy it more if you're a religious Christian, but no reason you can't find it fairly entertaining anyway. Some of the entertainment is unintentional. My favorite is the scene where Murdo escapes from the Turkish camp in the middle of the night, carrying the Holy Lance. He avoids his pursuers by running up the sand dunes outside Jaffa (ever tried running up a sand dune? I have! My calves are still aching), then finding time to form `a sturdy line' from some threads pulled from his cloak, tying them between two blades of grass and pulling on the far end to mislead his enemies about his location. All this, presumably, in pitch darkness. I think Mr Lawhead might benefit from reading Poul Anderson's article "On Thud and Blunder". It covers exactly this sort of thing.

Still, it is fun and I like the minimalist fantasy - apart from the lance and the odd appearance by St. Andrew, it's more-or-less a straight historical novel. He could have given the women more to do, but you can't have everything. I suggest waiting for the paperback.

David Coutts reviews:

The World of Warhammer by Richard Wolfrik Galland

Signet tpb November 1998 192 pages $29.95
ISBN 0-451-19740-2

I once owned a copy of the original Games Workshop Warhammer rules, and still own a copy of their Warhammer 40K rules. I've only had limited experience of playing either game, which are basically the same except for the era & setting. Warhammer is a fantasy miniatures battle system with reasonable role-playing elements, and Warhammer 40K is a Science-Fiction miniatures battle system with equally reasonable role-playing elements. There are a number of related boardgames (including fantasy Gridiron), PC games & Playstation games (I have Warhammer: Dark Omen), and a host of miniatures readily available for each in 15mm & 25mm flavors. Games Workshop have also recently released Warhammer: Ancient Battles. It's a classic-history miniatures battle system with reasonable role-playing elements....

And so to *The World Of Warhammer* itself. Spikes are IN. Lots of spikes and spiky, sharp & pointy things. Dwarves look like they've just been listening to "Anarchy In The UK" whilst reading Tolkein. Chaos Dwarves are the same, but either stupid or on some heavy, heavy drugs. And very mad (in both senses of the word!). High Elves are very colorful but seriously depressed (too much classical music?), Wood Elves are a little greener, Dark Elves...a little darker, really. All the Elves are typically anorexic. Then there are Men from "The Empire" (Forged By The Hammer of Sigmar - poor things!) and Bretonnia (Land Of Chivalry - well done chaps!).

On the baddie-front the Orcs & Goblins make their obligatory appearance (very, very spiky...big teeth...big weapons...and quite, quite green), and a few less well-known baddies like the Skaven (big rats, organised into clans), Lizardmen of various colors (definitely reptilian-looking - guaranteed), Undead (a favorite in Warhammer circles) and various...things...from the Land of Chaos (must have taken a wrong turning after Bagdad).

In the guide you get background material on all of the above (with lots of pictures), maps for your campaigns, a timeline, and a section entitled "Great Events That Shaped The Warhammer World" and a pointer to some famous and infamous individuals.

Games Workshop, who once denied (in my presence) that their games were becoming miniatures-orientated, are clearly aiming at a juvenile market here. But they do such a good job of it that you just find yourself interested...

Karen Pender-Gunn reviews:

SF Online by David Hollingworth
(Rosanne Bersten's little net.guides)

Bantam pb January 1999 96 pages $7.95
ISBN 0-73380-208-7

What a perfectly useless little item of consumer pap. Anyone with a internet connection could find these sites on the world wide web without having to resort to the peppy comments of some net-head. Spend the money on up-dating your internet connection for more hours and do the searching yourself, you will get more out of the experience than reading this book. I expect lots of grandparents will buy this sort of book, wanting to seem cool for their grandkids, that's where they will sell. For the rest of us: don't bother.

Alan Stewart reveiws:

Aurealis: Issue 22 Edited by Stephen Higgins & Dirk Strasser

Chimaera Publications magazine December 1998 124 pages $9.95 ISSN 1035-1205

This issue of *Aurealis* is subtitled `Birth and rebirth'. Continuing it's eclectic content, you get seven stories; an excellent interview; eight reviews of recent books by Australian authors; Australian SF Writer's news pages; and the funny bits at the end. No real stand out stories, but they're all solid SF this time, with a touch of horror. Van Ikin's interview with Stephen Dedman was the highlight of the issue. Market information and discussion about a `Society of Australian Speculative Fiction Writers' formed the bulk of the News section.

Recommended for what's happening in the world of Australian SF fiction.

Books Received

Dinosaur Summer	Greg Bear	Voyager	pb
Ronan's Revenge	James Bibby	Orion	pb
Shadowrun: The Terminus Experiment	Jonathan E Bond & Jak Koke	Roc (Penguin)	pb
Star Trek: Insurrection	J M Dillard	Pocket (S&S)	hc
Star Trek: Action	Terry J Erdmann	Pocket (S&S)	hc
The Stainless Steel Rat	Harry Harrison	Orion	pb
The Stainless Steel Rat's Revenge	Harry Harrison	Orion	pb
The Stainless Steel Rat Goes to Hell	Harry Harrison	Millennium	pb
The Sleeper in the Sands	Tom Holland	Little Brown	tpb
Rameses 3: The Battle ofKadesh	Christian Jacq	Simon & Schuster	tpb
Star Wars: The Bounty Hunter Wars 2 - Slave Ship	K W Jeter	Bantam Spectra	pb
Nimisha's Ship	Anne McCaffrey	Bantam Press	hc
The Deed of Paksenarrion 3: Oath of Gold	Elizabeth Moon	Orbit	pb
Nymphomation	Jeff Noon	Corgi	tpb
Dance of the Voodoo Handbag	Robert Rankin	Corgi	pb
Winter of the World: The Castle of the Winds	Michael Scott Rohan	Orbit	pb
The Crimson Shadow 2: Luthien's Gamble	R A Salvatore	Voyager	pb
Battletech: Twilight of the Clans VII - Prince of Havoc	Michael A Stackpole	Roc (Penguin)	pb
Battletech: Warrior 3 - Coupe	Michael A Stackpole	Roc (Penguin)	pb
Eyes of Silver	Michael A Stackpole	Bantam Spectra	pb
The Searchers 2: Empire of Dust	Chet Williamson	Avon	pb

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