

AUSTRALIAN



NEWS

Special Issue 3

August 2002

News

Reviews

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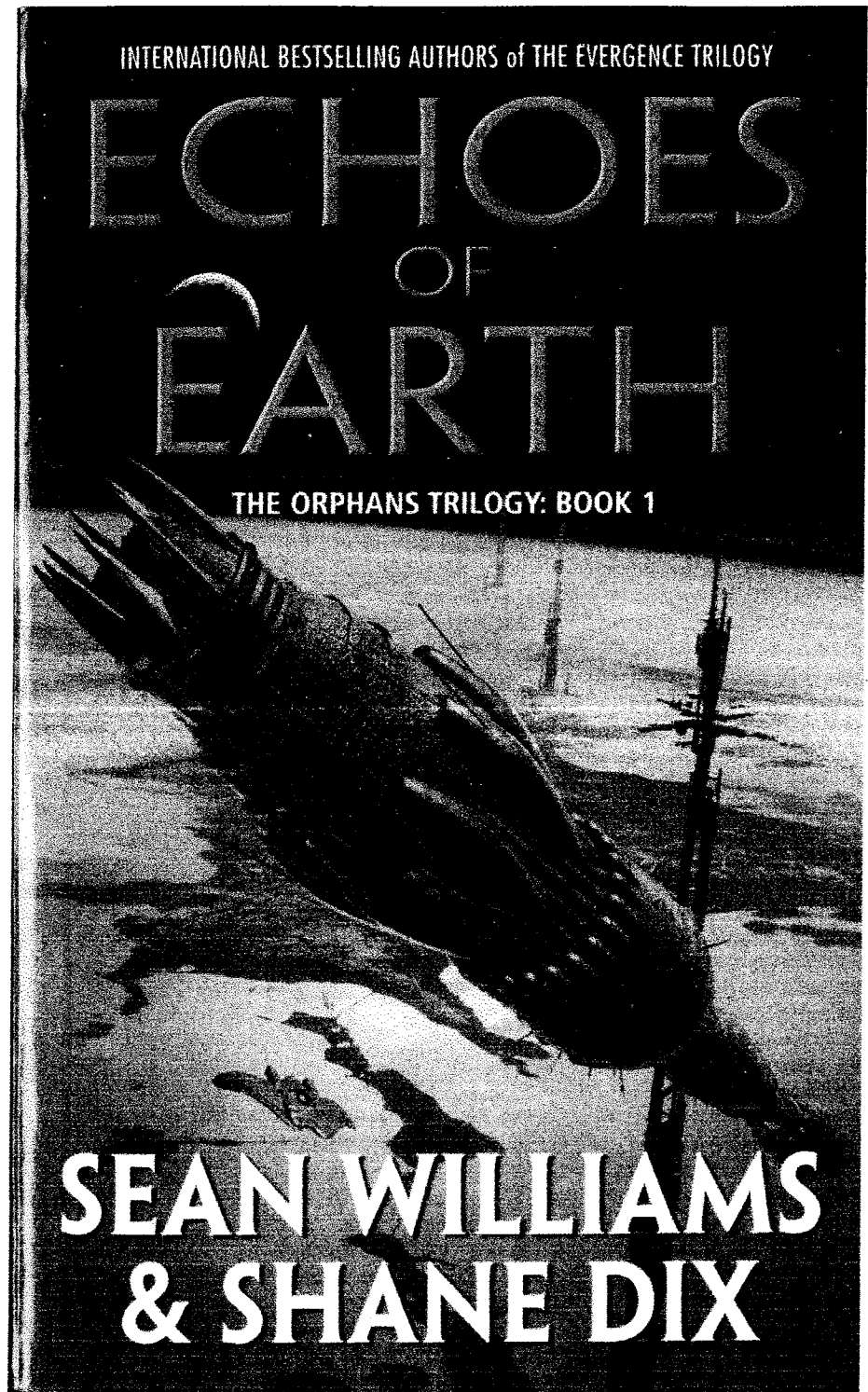
**SCIENCE
FICTION**

FANTASY

&

HORROR

BOOKS
RELEASED IN
AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS SPECIAL ISSUE 3

AUGUST 2002

Edited and published by MERV and HELENA BINNS

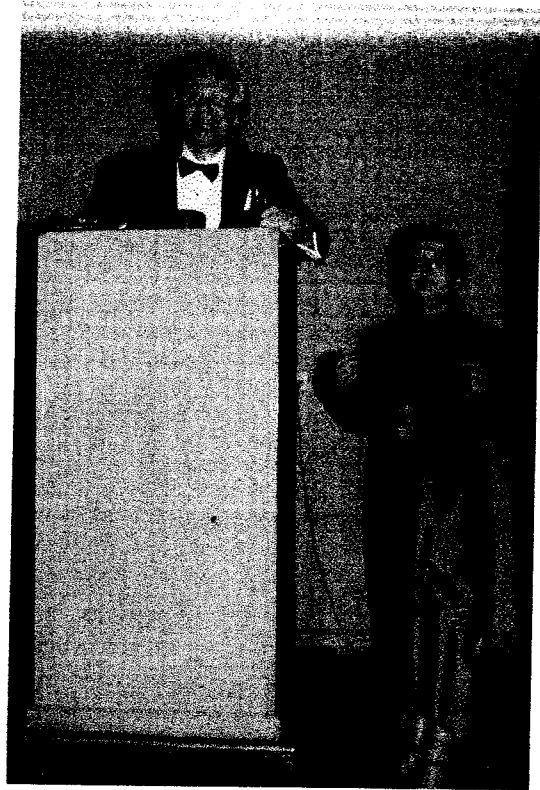
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EDITORIAL

From now on in the Special issues of ASFN I will endeavour to give my observations on SF fan events, books received and movies as well as the usual booklistings. Parts will appear in the *THYME* version which Alan may add to the reviews and book lists. At the same time I am trying to write my personal memoirs, trip reports and comments on various things in my personal zine *The Rubbish Bin(ns)*, but due to our having to move house, which took from February to April this year, and even now not yet being properly settled into our new rented premises, material I have typed up months back is still unpublished. But I will get there. I did actually get Part One of my *Melbourne SF Fandom Memoirs* out in time for the 41st National Australian Science Fiction Convention, *CONVERGENCE* in June and just prior to the that The Melbourne SF Clubs 50th Anniversary party in May this year. I hope to cover the later parts from 1970 on, all the conventions I have attended here and overseas and so.

Meanwhile, some observations of *CONVERGENCE*:

The previous convention Helena and I managed to get to was the 3rd Australian World SF Convention in 1999, *AUSSIECON III*, which apart from the pleasure of seeing many old friends, some of whom I may never see again, was a little disappointing. *Why?* you may say. Well, all the program items I wanted to see or be involved in, clashed with one another and there were gaps in between with nothing of interest to us. There were some panels on Melbourne SF Fandom's history which were poorly attended, although all enjoyed one another on the panels as did the audience, but most people were off at other items with big name authors and such. *CONVERGENCE* did it much better and despite the fact that we would have liked to have seen more old friends there, we and the good sized audience enjoyed Race Mathews, Dick Jenssen and myself talking about the very early days of the MSFC and a later period of Melbourne Fandom with Bruce Gillespie, Bill Wright and me. We did enjoy *CONVERGENCE* very much, especially because it may well be the last we will get to for a long time, if ever again, due mainly to the cost of memberships now. Incidentally, getting back to *AUSSIECON III*, maybe the big cons are trying to cater to too many individual interests and should have less items and be more carefully planned. *CONVERGENCE* was very well organised by Rose Mitchell and her committee and we give them full marks for a very well run and enjoyable get-together.



ConVergence Master of Ceremonies, SF author JACK DANN and convention's organiser ROSE MITCHELL at the DITMAR Awards, *ConVergence* Australian National SF Convention, June 2002.

Photo by Helena Roberts Binns

All the discussions we got to were interesting and only one or two of interest clashed or we were both not interested in the same discussions. The Guests of Honor Speeches by Joe Haldeman, Gay Haldeman, Sean Williams, Lucy Sussex and Race Mathews, were all great.



A Ditmar 'DITMAR':

DICK (DITMAR) JENSSEN being congratulated by old school friend and co-founder of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club, former Labor Parliamentarian RACE MATHEWS, who presented him with one of the awards that bear his name, at the *ConVergence* 'DITMARS', for his computer generated SF illustrations for Bill Wright's ANZAPA publication, *INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP* and others including the *ConVergence* PR.

Photo by Helena Roberts Binns

It was wonderful to see Dick "Ditmar" Jenssen himself receive a **DITMAR AWARD** for the *Best Fan Artist*, for his marvellous computer generated illustrations for the convention's publicity, Bill Wright's, Bruce Gillespie's, and Elaine Cochran's zines, my *Rubbish Bin(ns)* and probably others I do not know about or I have forgotten. Bruce Gillespie received the Best Australian Fan Production - Fanzine award for *SF COMMENTARY*, which he richly deserved again, but we had a secret wish for Bill Wright to get it for his *INTERSTELLER RAMJET SCOOP*, as Bruce has already won at least a dozen Ditmars already. If you want to see all the different designs, shapes and sizes of the *Ditmars* over the years, just have a look at Bruce's mantelpiece sometime. He also won the Best Fan Writer Award this year.



At the Harper Collins VOYAGER book launches, 'Slow Glass Books' proprietor JUSTIN ACKROYD hands author SEAN WILLIAMS a copy of his novel 'Echoes of Earth', co-authored by Shane Dix.

Photo by Helena Roberts Binns

Other Ditmar Winners included *Lirael* by Garth Nix for Best Australian Novel; *Absolute Uncertainty* by Lucy Sussex and *The Diamond Pit* by Jack Dann as joint winners of The Best Short Fiction; *Earth is but a Star* edited by Damien Broderick for the Best Collected Work; and The Best Australian Fan Production (Other than Fanzine, that is) *Spaced Out Website* by Geoff & Miriam (www.vicnet.au/~spaceout/) joint winners with *Mitch? 2 Tarts of the New Millenium* by Anthony Mitchell. A new *Ditmar* at least to me, was Best Australian Professional Achievement, which went to Dirk Strasser and Stephen Higgins for editing and production of *Aurealis*. Good luck to *AUREALIS* which has now been publishing since 1990.



Authors JACK DANN and LUCY SUSSEX, joint winners of the 2002 Ditmar for Best Australian Short Fiction

They instituted the *AUREALIS Awards* which now stand with the *Ditmars* as the most prestigious writing awards in the field. Cat Sparks was awarded the Best New Talent Ditmar.

The award presented by the Australian Science Fiction Foundation in honour of the late author A. Bertram Chandler was presented to John Foyster, who because of illness was not able to attend, and we all missed him very much on this 50th anniversary of Melbourne fandom. Roman Orsanski, also from Adelaide, where John has been ensconced for some years now, collected it for John. I think everybody is aware of the contribution that Foyster has made to Australian SF and he has been in all our thoughts since we learned of his illness. Get well John!



CAT SPARKS receiving her Ditmar award for 'Best New Talent' from Convergence organiser Rose Mitchell

It is quite amazing to see the growth of science fiction, and even more so fantasy, publishing in Australia. I do not know how much influence American expatriate and *CONVERGENCE* 'Toast Master' Jack Dann has had on the field, especially regarding his association with Harper Collins publishers, who have published most, if not all of his recent works in Australia so far and some of his earlier ones. Collins launched some of their new publications at a party during the con and they included titles by Sean Williams, Simon Brown, Trudi Canavan and Jack Dann. In years past we were battling to find enough new Australian SF&F publications to nominate for the Ditmar Awards, but amongst the best writing awards thirteen novels, short fiction and collections were nominated and six Australian publishers or magazines were involved. A new SF magazine titled *ALTAIR* was also launched at the con and a nice looking, perfect bound publication it is, with some very innovative contents. I think the people involved are very brave, but we wish them the best of luck in their venture.



Author TRUDI CANAVAN at the Harper Collins Voyager launch of her book 'The Novice'



Author SIMON BROWN at the launch of his book 'Sovereign'
By Harper Collins/Voyager

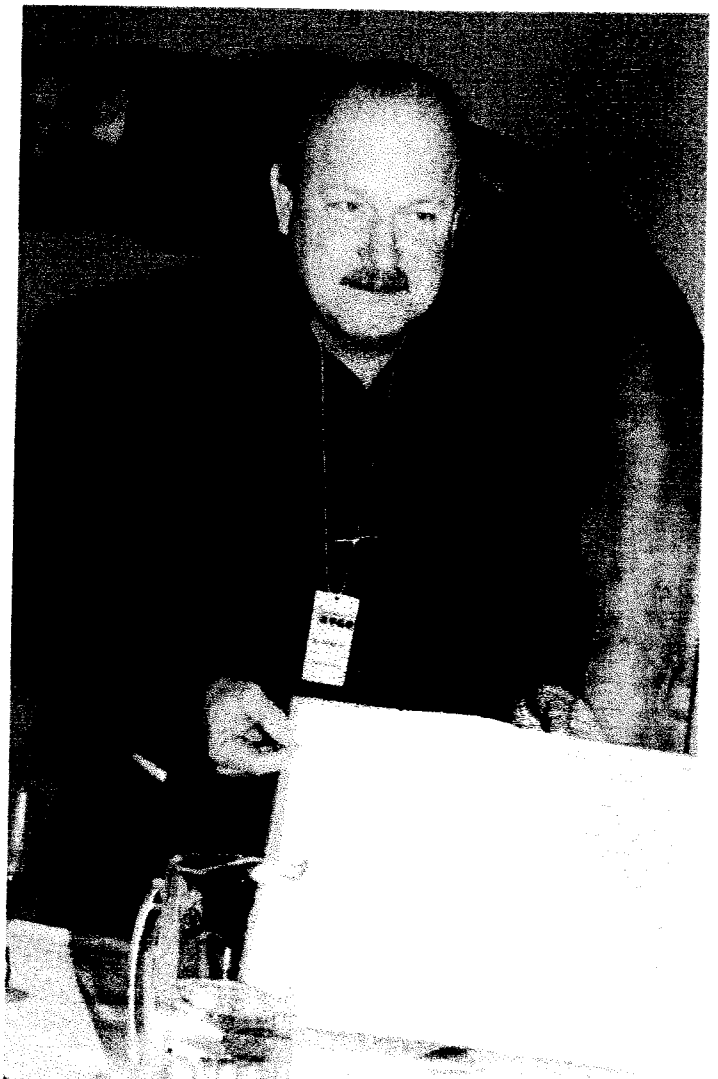
It was great to see Paul Collins receive *The Mac Award*, which has been instituted to honour the work of Peter McNamara, who published the best Australian sf magazine seen to that date, *APHELION*, in the 1980s and then went on to publish a series of SF books by Sean McMullen, Terry Dowling, Damien Broderick, Sean Williams and others as Aphelion Publishers. Paul, who flew the flag for Australian SF when nobody else was ready to do so, was very pleased to receive this award and some recognition of his efforts in the field. The very nice trophy (designed I think by Lewis Morley) that he was presented with took the form of a crystal ball held in upstretched hands, a design that seemed familiar but I cannot quite recall where I have seen it before. Are we getting too many awards though, with some of them crossing the territory of others? When my Space Age Books partner Ron Graham died in 1979, I wanted to initiate an award in Ron's name, but when the *Chandler Award* was started by the Foundation, I gave up the idea and I have always regretted it, as Ron Graham deserved to be remembered for his contribution to SF in Australia. But as I have said, we have more than enough awards now, with all our friends and associates patting one another on the back, which I am not knocking, but there has to be a limit, doesn't there.



SF author and publisher PAUL COLLINS receiving from Mr Shillitoe the newly created 'MAC' Award for his services to SF publishing in Australia, at the Awards Ceremony, ConVergence Australian National SF Convention, June 2002.

The speeches by the GoHs, the award presentations, Joe Haldeman and other authors reading from their stories, the interesting panels, were all highlights of this convention. Only one event put us off a bit and that was the costume party, with no actual parade of individual costumes for everyone to see clearly and photograph, and a lot of loud music and dancing. (We must be getting old!) However it was great to see Robert Jan and Gail Adams win the Best Costume Awards for their great work yet again. All in all a most enjoyable convention that would have only been better if more of our old friends had been able to attend.

MERV BINNS



SF author JOE HALDEMAN at ConVergence, June 2002 Australian National Science Fiction Convention, Melbourne, showing pages of some of his original handwritten story drafts.

Photo by Helena Roberts Binns

MOVIES SEEN

HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

Not all significant movies have been based on books, but some, such as *Gone With the Wind*, certainly have, though the movies often do not do justice to the books. We have been aware of the phenomenon of a worldwide best selling series of children's novels featuring a young wizard named Harry Potter, and we now have a movie featuring him and his friends, that we anticipated would have its fair share of the mind-boggling special effects which we have grown to expect in movies now. And we hear that director Chris Columbus has stuck very closely to the book by author D.C.Rowling (too closely, according to some critics). It has a significant cast with young Daniel Radcliffe being carefully chosen for the part of *Harry*, accompanied by such well known actors as Robbie Coltrane as *Rubeus Hagrid*, Richard Harris as *Albus Dumbledore*, Alan Rickman as *Professor Snape*, and Maggie Smith and others.

In this movie, presumably based on the first of the books, young Harry, who has the ability to make things happen, is packed off to wizards' school. The teachers all turn out to be a pretty weird lot, each specialising in various aspects of their craft. Harry is taken under the wing of a very scruffy looking, very hairy giant rousabout played by Robbie Coltrane, who it turns out also has a few tricks up his sleeve. Harry soon learns to use his talents, especially levitating and broom flying, becoming a proficient player for his house in a mid-air ball game. Overcoming those who would do him harm with the help of friends, especially the master of chemical based spells, played by an as usual sinister looking Alan Rickman, he confronts various nasty creatures and turns the tables on them all. The sets in the old castle-like-college building looked great, there was a lot of flying about, but I expected to see even more spell casting and consequently a lot more special effects. However, sticking very closely to the book perhaps meant that the makers could not just simply let their heads go on sfx. I enjoyed it and so did Helena, and I am looking forward to the movies that are to follow *HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE*, which I believe are already in production. The books have been banned in some church schools around Melbourne, it was reported in the press, but I am quite sure that will not stop the kids reading them. It may well encourage some to actually read and the Libraries Association said that anything that can bring children back to reading more, whatever, can't be all bad. "Witchcraft!" one teacher proclaimed on the TV news, which is just silly because the stories are simply pure fantasy and magic and just good fun.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

The first part of *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* movie epic which is being made in three parts and costing around \$600 million, hit the screen world wide in December. The previews and fragments shown in the news on the box were enough to have us, like millions of other lovers of the books, waiting with bated breath for its release. The makers of the movie put on a very expensive publicity bash at the Cannes Film Festival, which was held in a medieval castle. A trailer seen in June showed enough glimpses of it tell us that it was going to be great and the techniques used in such movies as *The Mummy* and *Starship Troopers*, plus New Zealand's marvellous scenery, have enabled the movie's makers to wonderfully transpose Tolkien's descriptive writing onto the screen.

The Fellowship of the Ring was released here in December 2001, *The Two Towers* is to come in December '02 and *The Return of the King* in December '03. I can hardly wait, but I cannot say that I have as much enthusiasm for the coming *Star Wars* episodes, though time will tell if they are better than *Phantom Menace*. Harper Collins publishers have announced two books relating to the first TLOTR movie; *The Fellowship of the Ring Visual Companion* and *The Lord of the Rings Official Movie Guide*, but I am sure that there will be more.

I have not let myself become a devoted reader of fantasy, simply because I have so much SF I have wanted to read. There are still many books on my shelves including mainly novels and most are SF, with one or two classic fantasy volumes I still should read. Of course I did read J.R.R. Tolkien's *THE HOBBIT* and *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* a few years after they were first published, at the insistence of my friend in the Melbourne SF Club, Ian Crozier, even though I insisted I was not interested in "fairy stories". Helena was also urged to read it by Ian, eventually becoming a very devoted fan and producing a series of rate paintings based on it. I loved *The Hobbit* and *TLOTR* but I have still restrained myself from reading more than one or two other fantasy volumes. In due course *The Lord of the Rings* became a massive best seller. We sold more copies of that than of any other single novel or series when my shop Space Age Books was operating from 1970 to 1985. When I saw that a movie was being made by Ralph Bakshi, who had a reputation for innovative animated movies, I was very pleased, but when I and all my Tolkien devotee friends saw it we were devastated. An unmitigated disaster, an abortion that should never ever have been released. The very successful movie maker John Boorman showed great interest in having another go at it, but the cost I believe put him off and he turned around and made *EXCALIBUR*, which is the best King Arthur movie so far.

The main problem was the overall cost in making a movie of *TLOTR* and in particular the special effects and how to not only portray the marvellous creatures and scenes that Tolkien envisioned realistically and do justice to the books, which Mr Bakshi did not. So over recent years as I have seen the amazing results of computer generated visual effects in many movies, I knew the time was ripe for some clever moviemaker to have another go at it. The scenery we saw in some of the stuff being filmed in the countryside in our neighbouring land New Zealand, such as the crazy TV series *XENA*, looked great, so it was no surprise when we heard that *The Lord of the Rings* was to be made there. We waited eagerly for its completion and release and now at last we have seen the first one of three movies released on Boxing Day here this year. Will they do justice to the books and tell the story as it should be told? we thought. With three movies, based on each of the three volumes, to be released each Christmas for the next three years, they are not exactly cramming it all up. We saw snippets of scenes from it at the theatres and on TV commercials and it looked GREAT, so that was a good start, but our fingers were crossed when we went see it...

Many Tolkien devotees will at least have a bone to pick with the movie's maker Peter Jackson, in that he has made some obvious changes to the story, with the things that some characters do, or they are entirely missed, such as Tom Bombadil. But when has any movie ever been made based on a book, that did not make some changes to the scenario? So somewhat reluctantly I can forgive Jackson, as the movie is so good otherwise. First of all, the casting of the characters is superb. Gandalf played by Ian McKellan is excellent, Ian Holm who played Frodo in the BBC radio serial of *TLOTR* some years ago, is great as

Bilbo, Elijah Wood as Frodo and his Hobbit friends carry off their roles very well. Christopher Lee - who has been a *Lord of the Rings* devotee since he read it when it was first published and now reads it at least once a year - makes a marvellous Saruman. Australian actor Hugo Weaving looks and acts the part of Elrond superbly, an unrecognisable John Rhys Davies, who you may remember in the TV series *Sliders*, does a good job as the blustering dwarf Gimli, Cate Blanchett as Galadriel is perfect and all the others really look the part. The costumes, weapons and armour are superb also, and the sets are simply marvellous, particularly the Hobbiton countryside and homes outside and inside, and the caverns of Moria, with the wonderful New Zealand scenery making us believe that this "really" is Middle Earth.

I do not need to discuss the story apart from the fact that Jackson has made some relatively small changes to Tolkien's narrative. The role of Arwen is enlarged, presumably to add some love interest to the plot, and the scene of Frodo confronting the Nazguls at the ford has Arwen carrying him on her horse, rather than Frodo on his own. We have all read the books and loved them and perhaps we feel a little shocked that anybody has the temerity to make even the slightest changes. The important thing is that the books have finally been brought to the screen and by a man who obviously loves the tale as much as we all do. We all have our own minds-eye picture of what Middle Earth and the characters look like, but Jackson's vision is about as good as any of us could possibly hope for. What more can I say! I give it 95 out of 100 and we are eagerly awaiting parts two and three, but let's hear what a *real* Tolkien fan, who has even produced a series of paintings illustrating scenes from the books, has to say.....

MB



"FLIGHT TO THE FORD" Painting by Helena Roberts Binns

(I think he means me - Helena.) Well, like Merv, of course I found *The Fellowship of the Ring* visually stunning. Since first reading *THE HOBBIT* and *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* at the impressionable age of 17, and re-reading them maybe a dozen times over the next 30 or 40 years, I have been struck by the intensely visual quality of Tolkien's writing. I have admired his own unique style of illustration and was inspired by his wonderfully evocative descriptive prose to do a series of paintings of scenes from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. I had always hoped to see Tolkien's stories made into a movie, but only if it could be done *properly*. I also knew that would not be possible until special effects became sufficiently sophisticated to do justice to Tolkien's majestic vision. Well, now they are!

I am glad the moviemakers had the good sense to wait until now, because a live action *TLOTR* would not have been credible without the magic of CGI. It was worth the wait! I agree with Merv that the choice of cast members was excellent, and that goes a long way toward a successful dramatic interpretation of a well known and loved book. Because Middle Earth is said to be a landscape not unlike Western Europe, yet not identical to it, I have always felt that New Zealand would be the obvious setting for it (even more so since seeing recent historical fantasy productions such as *Hercules* and *Xena* made there.) Its scenery has a European look about it, yet it is recognisably different, with a slightly alien quality, like an idealised embodiment of the vision of the Victorian 'Romantics'. It has the full gamut of locations, from idyllic pastoral settings to mysterious forests to desolate volcanic wastes, and its mountain vistas are breathtaking. The enhanced natural views in *The Fellowship of the Ring* create an atmosphere of enchantment that embodies the world created by Tolkien.

The setting of Rivendell, the sprawling medieval palace amidst a backdrop of plunging waterfalls, with its Renaissance style interiors and the unifying artistry of lighting, staging, design and costume, create a 'pre-Raphaelite' ambience. The scene between Aragorn and Arwen, in which they meet under moonlight and converse in High Elvish, is quite magical. The enchanted Forest of Lothlorien is captivating, with the elves dwelling in the ultimate tree houses, built upon elevated platforms between the soaring buttresses of a cathedral of trees. (Though I miss the canopy of golden beech leaves described so eloquently by Tolkien. Having seen England's Burnham Beeches in the autumn, I know what he means.) And the rustic dugout village of Hobbiton is delightful, but the lush Kiwi pastures are not the traditional fields and hedgerows of old England upon which Tolkien modelled the homeland of the hobbit folk.

Although I'm not a total Tolkien purist, and am aware of the constraints of cramming maybe twelve hours of narrative into about two, I was perturbed to see some unnecessary departures from the original, such as the scene in which Arwen ambushes Aragorn and the hobbits on their way to Rivendell. Then when they are in peril from the sinister *Nazgul*, she scoops Frodo up onto her horse and gallops off with him across the Ford, with the Black Riders in hot pursuit. I am sure that it was done for dramatic effect and with the best of intentions, making Arwen a more dynamic player in the adventure rather than an aloof mysterious ethereal beauty leaving all of the action to the boys. But to those who know that it was the elf Glorfindel who with Aragorn held the *Nazgul* at bay until Elrond sent down the flood, and that it was Glorfindel's horse that Frodo rode alone across the ford, it is somewhat disconcerting. On the other hand, if Tolkien had been telling his tale in this day and age rather than half a century ago, perhaps he would have written it that way himself!

Helena Binns

THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES

For the first time in many years we got to see a preview, and to a movie that I probably would have not bothered with otherwise. Indications were that it would be an *X-Files* style pic and it more or less was. Richard Gere stars in this rather dark tale, filmed in a very dark and foreboding style that begins with the credits. The event that occurs towards the end of the movie is based on a real happening, but the character played by Gere and the events that take place leading up to the violent ending, I do not think should be taken as anything but fantasy.

If we were to take it all as fact, some very strange things were seen endeavouring to warn people of this small American town that a disaster was imminent, but nobody got the message until it was too late. An interesting, well made movie that would have been regarded as a good episode of *X-Files*, but agent Mulder might have worked it all out sooner and saved the day.

STAR WARS – ATTACK OF THE CLONES

There is little doubt that George Lucas' vision for this series was a grand one and I loved the middle three movies very much, with only minor reservations. However I was not over impressed with episode one which we saw last year, *The Phantom Menace*. The plot seemed rather thin and some of the alien characters did not impress, but I thought the young queen had some presence and the scenes, making use of today's computer graphics techniques no doubt, were great. On second look on TV I appreciated it more, specially being able to concentrate a bit more on the scenery and it must be looked at as a part of the whole story. Episode two, *ATTACK OF THE CLONES*, which we saw this week, is far better as an individual movie. Not only because it is even more spectacular, but the plot has more substance to it and the story over all is beginning to fall into place. However the visuals really do steal the show, with so much for your eyes to take in being just too, too much. If there were years between the scenes of the city in *Metropolis* and say *Blade Runner*, *Attack of the Clones* is even light years ahead. Mindboggling and magnificent are just words, and do little justice to how spectacular the scenes of the cities and planetary landscapes are. Queen Amidala's home world of Naboo has scenes reminiscent of the work of the well-known American artist of the early twentieth century, Maxfield Parrish, whose art has always impressed me greatly.

An enduring figure of menace, after his significant role in the first of *The Lord of the Rings* movies, Christopher Lee, appears in *Attack of the Clones* as another Jedi Knight who has succumbed to the dark side of the force. His old mate in the Hammer horror films of the 1970s, Peter Cushing, of course appeared in the first *Star Wars* epic we saw, as the commander of the *Death Star*. So I am eagerly awaiting the release of Episode Three, not only to see and understand Anakin's transformation into *Darth Vader*, but to be even more bedazzled by the wonderful scenery that Lucas' team have dreamed up. Good science fiction? I do not suppose it is, but as a great "epic fantasy" adventure set in a mythical future universe, we are yet to see it surpassed. As literature one cannot put it in the same street as *Lord of the Rings*, but as movies they are both visually, equally great and I personally am looking forward to seeing the movies that are to follow.

MINORITY REPORT

If *AI* was really a Kubrick movie, although Spielberg directed it, *MINORITY REPORT* is all Spielberg. I have not read the original Philip K. Dick story that it is based on, but I believe that it is most unlikely that the movie's happy and satisfactory ending, to me at any rate, would be the same as the original story. This movie is pure SF! *Star Wars – Attack of the Clones* is a pretty movie but although it set on other worlds, with lots of scientific hardware, the plot is really more like a heroic fantasy saga. *MINORITY REPORT* has so much scientific gimmickry in it, from the radio controlled cars climbing the side of buildings to the computer screens controlled by the wave of your hand and the spectacular sets, it is quite spectacular in a pure "gosh

wow" way. In other words as near to a pure science fiction movie that we have seen. I will not disclose too much of the plot apart from saying that the main concept is the use of a small number of people with psychic abilities, being used by a special police force to tune in on people who are about to commit a crime, enabling the special police to stop them. Everything is working well until the hero himself, who is the policeman running the Pre-Crime department, played by Tom Cruise, becomes a victim of misuse of the system. Not just a good idea but a movie that is first class in every movie making and specially SF department. Do not miss this one. It really is good.

FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON (TV Series)

From our point of view this is one of the best things ever screened on TV, and full marks to Tom Hanks, who played the astronaut James Lovell in the movie *Apollo Thirteen*, for having the passion and ability to produce this twelve episode series. He also introduces each episode and even acts in a wonderful scene depicting the making of the classic silent movie made by George Melies in a 1898, *A Trip to the Moon*, as one of Melies' assistants. Melies' little movies are quite hilarious. We screened a short subject movie on Melies' work at the MSFC, which we borrowed from the then State Film Centre, back in the 1960s and parts of his films have been used in the introductory scenes in such movies as *Around the World In Eighty Days*. Hanks used scenes from the same movie in episode twelve of the TV series, I believe simply to remind his audience of the dream we romantics had of actually going to the moon some day. The dream that actually came true in our lifetime, but was cut short by shortsighted politicians. Helena and I are both avid supporters of the space program and we share a passionate interest in space exploration and astronomy. Helena has even met some of the astronauts visiting Australia, when she was a member of the Space Association of Australia. Nothing has given me more satisfaction than to watch the first landing on the Moon on an old TV set in the MSFC clubroom, above my employees McGill's Newsagencies' store room, because I had finally stuck it to all those illiterate neanderthals who had laughed at my interest in science fiction and in space, who made such inane comments as "When are you going to the Moon Merv?"

Well I never made it to the Moon in person, but I sure have in spirit and it was wonderful seeing the whole of the Apollo program recreated in this series, though it has revived the disappointment and frustration that I have felt at its cancellation and that the exploration of the Moon has not been carried on. I shall most likely not live to see man land on the Moon again and although NASA's plans to get to Mars are going ahead, who knows what the politicians may do about that. Whether I live long enough to see that is in the lap of the gods. I did wonder in my teens if I would ever see a Moon landing, which did happen thirty years ago, and I thank the powers that be that at least I was able to watch that. The wonders of science that have proliferated in the three generations of my father and his father, and myself, in little over one hundred years never cease to amaze me. I am thankful to have lived in this time and to have been able to take advantage to some degree in these wonders such as flying around the world in about a day, television and computers, not to mention all the small everyday things we now take for granted. Space travel is a reality, not just a science fiction dream and I know in my heart and soul that my science fiction dreams will to some degree and in various forms, come true. Reality has always been "greater" than fiction.

THE LAST MAN ON THE MOON

The day after I typed the last paragraph Helena insisted that we take the long tram ride out to Latrobe University, which I was reluctant to do, to see and hear astronaut Harrison Schmitt, the last man on the moon, talk about his experiences. I knew that the chance of ever actually seeing in the flesh a man who has been to the moon would probably never occur again so I agreed to go and I am very pleased that I did. Listening to him describe his experiences as the only scientist - a geologist - to walk on the moon on the *Apollo 17 Mission*, and the last astronaut to do so, was an experience that I will never forget. Schmitt is an advocate of the use of the moon as a stepping off place for further space exploration, such as the trip to Mars and use of the Moon's natural resources, all of which certainly seemed very logical.

MEN IN BLACK II

Now for a bit of frivolous fun! Moviemakers are flat out making as much use as they can of special effects. Not just the SF&F epics but adventure, caper movies and especially comedy and in particular those with animals. Talking animals in such as *SNOW DOGS* and animated and live action shows like *STUART LITTLE*. A preview of the second feature looks absolutely hilarious, but I am a complete sucker for talking animal films. I even love the commercials featuring animals on TV. But getting back to SF, we went to see *MEN IN BLACK II* and it was as much fun as the original, with an alien agent that looks like a pug dog stealing the show wanting to get in on the action and talking like a New York gangster. Of course Lara Flynn Boyle (the D.A. lawyer in *The Practice* on TV) playing the very nasty alien, horrible, disgusting monster (BEM) in disguise as a sometimes sparsely clad attractive woman (the other BEM), was in stark contrast to what she/it really looks like in one of her/its, many forms. Special effects galore, great sets and a crazy plot will make this one just as popular as the first. The numerous aliens living on Earth come in excruciating shapes and sizes, with such as two heads or practically no heads at all and are great fun, but the laid-back worms are something else. We enjoyed it very much.

THE SIXTH SENSE

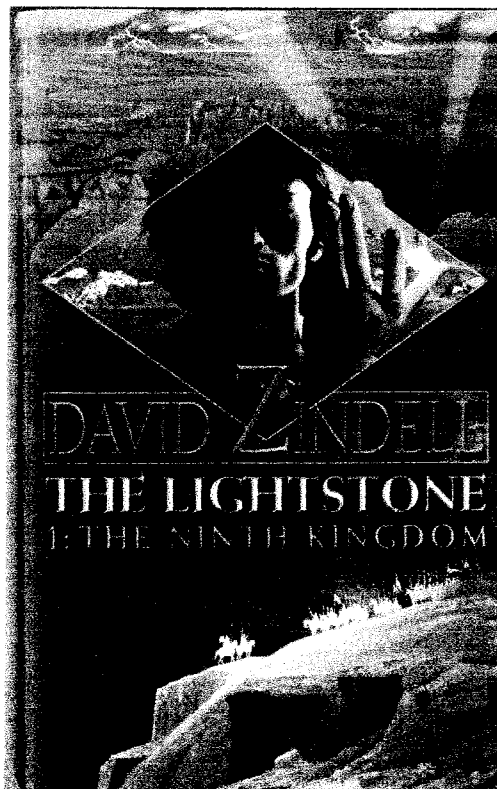
We missed seeing *THE SIXTH SENSE* at the theatre, so we were pleased to finally catch up with it on TV. The young boy actor Hayley Joel Osment, who we did get to see in his later movie *AI*, is very good as the youngster who can see ghosts. In a very similar category to *The Others*, but with a more pleasant ending, halfway between that and *Ghost*. In both *The Others* and *The Sixth Sense* any really observant watchers will anticipate the outcome, but I must confess I was not on the ball and was very surprised when Bruce Willis' character was not all he seemed to be.

There seems to be more fantasy and SF movies, or related things like *Mothman Prophecies* and the latest Mel Gibson movie, *Signs*, featuring crop circles, coming up than ever and it is going to be difficult to catch up with them all but we will try.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Due to circumstances already explained, I am a little behind in covering all the SF&F books released this year. I will endeavour to at least mention all those that publishers have sent us in some detail, but all titles released will be covered in the listing by author in due course. Reviews of course will be included of many received but we cannot cover them all, so this column is intended as a means of telling readers something about the titles that may not be reviewed in detail. I might add that I personally am not very interested in fantasy titles, which seem to have proliferated over recent years and I will give preference to SF titles in future.

Jack Dann's collection *JUBILEE* was published last year in large format paperback and recently in the usual paperback format. I would not call it small size as it includes 623 pages and can hardly be called a pocket book in the old terminology. Jack and Janeen Webb's anthology of Australian SF&F, *DREAMING DOWN UNDER* was released in two volumes in smaller size pb edition, but not quite necessary in the case of *JUBILEE*. Dan's Ditmar winning tale *The Diamond Pit* appears in this collection, which does include fantasy and SF stories. The only SF novel Harper Collins have sent us is *ECHOES OF EARTH* by Sean Williams and Shane Dix, which is the first in their *Orphans of Earth* trilogy. Volumes two and three will appear probably later this year and mid 2003 respectively. Their *Evergence* trilogy has established them as first class space opera exponents and they are even doing an original *Star Wars* trilogy, which will be released world wide in 2003. One title previously overlooked was *THE OTHER* by Ditmar winning author Victor Kelleher, in Voyager pb.



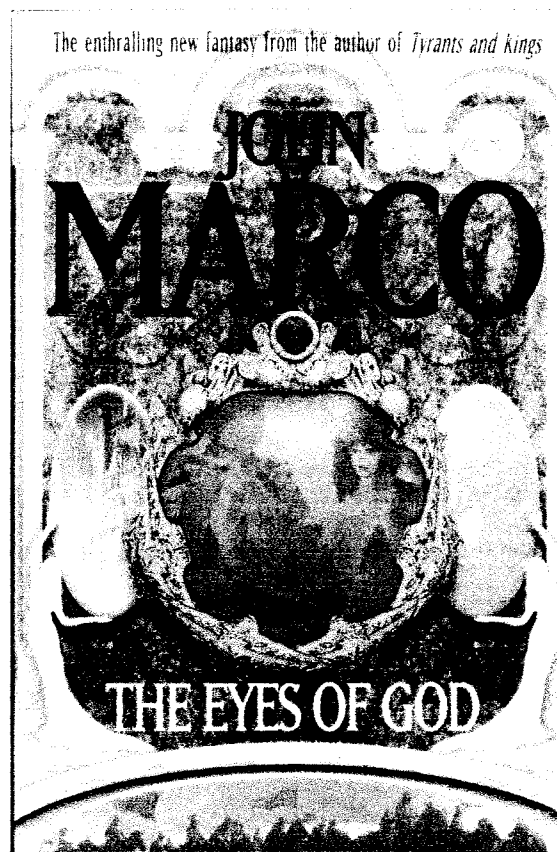
Fantasy volumes received from Harper Collins include: *THE LIGHTSTONE* by David Zindell is a big epic fantasy in large format pb, with over 800 pages, by the author of the SF epic *Neverness* and the *Requiem for Homo Sapiens* volumes.

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A *SORCERER'S TALE* is *Book One* of the *Isavolta Trilogy* by Sarah Zettel is a romantic fantasy which draws on fairytale and folklore to create a world of mystery and magic. Large pb. British writer Clive Barker who has created some intriguing places in his writings, presents such as *Weaveworld*. With this new tale *ABARAT*, he has not only created this world as an on going project in text, but has produced a series of paintings which will compliment the four volumes intended in which the story will be told. This is the first. Large format pb. Eric Van Lustbader is a more than well-established author of F&SF, with over twenty books to his credit. The volume in hand is volume two of *The Pearl Saga*, *THE VEIL OF A THOUSAND TEARS*. The story of a world that harbors a clash between technology and spirituality. Large format pb.

In the smaller pb editions from Harper Collins we have: *THE NOVICE* by Australian author Trudi Canavan, which is book two in her *Black Magician Trilogy*, a tale of intrigue in a society ruled by magicians. *SOVEREIGN* by another local lad, Simon Brown and is book three of his *Keys of Power* sequence, in which our hero is fighting to gain his royal inheritance. All indications are that Sara Douglass is an author of exceptional talent and well versed in the real histories which provide authentic backgrounds for her novels. *THE WOUNDED HAWK* is *Book Two* in her *The Crucible* sequence, for which she gained the *Aurealis Award*. *DESTINY* *Book Three of Infinity* by Fiona McIntosh is the final book in a trilogy, following *Betrayal and Revenge* and is a fantasy epic in the traditional mould. Fantasy novels in pb from Harper Collins Voyager imprint, continues with titles by British and American writers: *THE BONE DOLL'S TWIN* is *Book One* of the *Tamir Triad* by Linda Flewelling, which is a rather dark tale but with some interesting concepts. Fantasy giant Raymond E. Feist is joined by William R. Forstchen once again for *HONOURED ENEMY*, which is a tale in the *Legends of the Riftwar* saga. *THE WINDSINGERS* is by Megan Lindholm who now writes as Robin Hobb, which is a romantic fantasy about a cult of females who can among other things, manipulate the weather. Well established due Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman who gave us the *Dragonlance* series now present us with *Book 2* of the *Sovereign Stone* series, *GUARDIANS OF THE LOST*. Finally *Book III* in *The Celtic Crusades* series by Stephen Lawhead we received *THE MYSTIC ROSE*, a tale involving the discovery of The Holy Grail. And that is all I have from Harper Collins.

Next up is Allen & Unwin and the Victor Gollancz /Millenium titles: *CHASM CITY* by Alastair Reynolds is space opera at its best and a worthy successor to his *Revelation Space*, which is set in the same universe. A nice thick pb. Stephen Baxter's highly original sequence *Mammoth*, continues with *ICEBONES*, wherein the ancient animals as frozen embryos have been taken to the planet Mars. We find them endeavoring to survive, abandoned by the humans who brought them, in an experiment to terraform the red planet which has gone wrong. New in pb. West Australian author Greg Egan has now had eight SF books published since his first in the mid 1980s. Regarded as one of the top "ideas men" in the business, his eighth title *SCHILD'S LADDER* is hard science fiction at its best. Large format pb. *ALTERED CARBON* is a hard science thriller by first time author, university tutor, Richard Morgan and a story of immense scope and ideas. TPB. Author Stephen Coonts is not known as an SF writer, having written a variety of main stream adventure and borderline horror novels. His new title *SAUCER* takes a theme that authors such as Sir Arthur Clarke, Michael Crichton and our own Damien Broderick have had a go at, being the discovery of, in this case ancient, alien space vehicle crashed and abandoned on Earth. TPB.



In the fantasy category we have a new, large epic by John Marco, the author of the *Tyrants and Kings* trilogy. *THE EYES OF GOD* is a tale of warfare, magic and monsters. TPB. *DESTINY* is the third and final big volume in Elizabeth Haydon's *Rhapsody* trilogy. Described as "A lavish romantic tale set in a landscape of luxurious beauty and mystery", *Dreamwatch*. TPB. In small pb edition we have David Drake's fourth novel in the *Lord of the Isles* saga, *MISTRESS OF THE CATACOMBS*.

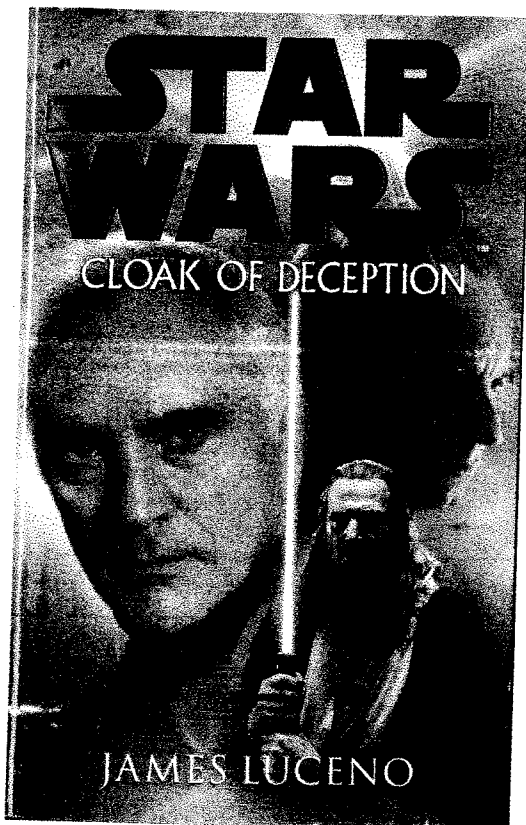
Random House Australia have sent us a variety of SF, fantasy and humour. *BLUE SILENCE* by Michelle Marquardt is the latest winner of the *George Turner Prize*. An alien contact novel, but this "close encounter" tale is a very intriguing. PB. Anne McCaffrey has to be one of our most enduring very popular authors and we have the fourth book in the *Catani Sequence*, in hard cover edition, *FREEDOM'S CHOICE*. The alien Eosi have left Botany and Earth, but things have been stolen essential for the survival of humanity and must be recovered. Lovers of humour in their SF&F reading love Terry Pratchett with a passion and demand more and more of his *Discworld* crazy goings on. New in pb is *THIEF OF TIME* in which the Monks of History are constructing *Discworld's* first truly accurate clock and as usual disaster is imminent. PB For the real *Discworld* enthusiasts we have *THE SCIENCE OF DISCWORD II*, *THE GLOBE*, by Pratchett, Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen. The *Discworld* has discovered Earth and changes and further changes are being made as the Wizards of the Unseen University set about their business. Hard cover.

For those readers who like "never ending stories", Kate Forsyth's *The Witches of Eileanan* is now up to volume 6, with *THE FATHOMLESS CAVE*, but alas it is the last title in the sequence. PB. Publishers do strange things at times, such as publishing one or two books in a series in hard cover and then the rest in paperback, or visa versa, but what Random have done with Cory Daniels' *SHADOW*

KINGDOM leaves me wondering. Books one and two, *The last T'En* and *Dark Legacy* were published in individual pb editions, but they have now combined those with part three, *WARRIOR CODE*, in one small format pb edition of 1393 pages, 2.5 cms thick. Paperback books of this size in my opinion are quite ridiculous and I feel obligated to admonish Bantam/Random House for not only not publishing *Warrior Code* separately, but for publishing such an impossible, unwieldy volume. *LUCIFER* by Michael Cody is an occult fantasy thriller, answering the question "what happens to us when we die?". TPB. For a bit of light relief after that we have a new crazy novel by Robert Rankin, *THE FANDOM OF THE OPERATOR*, in which our eccentric hero is not only trying to reanimate the dead, he is communicating with them. PB.

From Random we also have the novelization of the movie *MEN IN BLACK II* by Esther M. Friesner. Personally I think you have to see the movie to appreciate this stuff, but if you loved the movie you'll probably appreciate this PB.

Another book with movie connections is an original *Star Wars* novel set in the same period as the first episode of the saga, *CLOAK OF DESTRUCTION* by James Luceno, where in Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn and his apprentice Obi-Wan Kenobi foil an assassination plot on the Supreme Chancellor Valorum. PB.

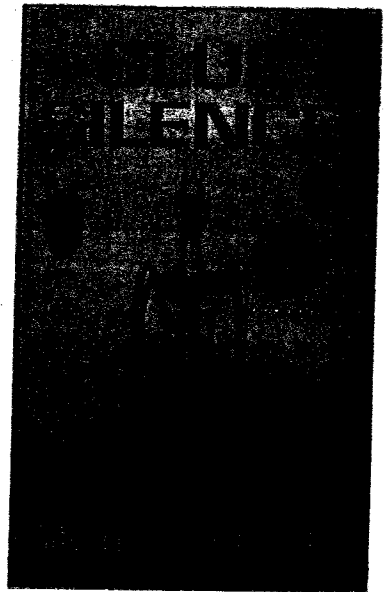


Two Orbit published paperbacks received from Penguin Books are both fantasy novels. What has happened to all the great SF Orbit used to publish? *HAND OF THE KING'S EVIL* is by Chaz Brenchley, which is the third book in the *Outremer* series. *SPIRIT OF THE STONE* is Maggie Fury's *Shadowleague* sequence, set in the world of Myrial. Also received earlier in the year one SF title from ROC, *ANGEL DESTRUCTION*, a tale of bitter conflict between spacefaring peoples.

MERV BINNS

BOOKS WE HAVE READ

Soon after our friend George Turner's passing, Random House/Bantam Books Australia, initiated an award in his name, for original SF&F novels. The first title was a humorous fantasy, which did not appeal to me, however I did read Maxine McArthur's *Time Future*, the second winning novel of the GTA, which reminded me very much of TV's *Babylon 5* or *Star Trek -Deep Space 9* and I enjoyed reading it. The last winner of the award



was yet another lady author, Michelle Marquardt, with her novel *BLUE SILENCE*. Again set on a space station, being one of a pair of Earth orbiting man made worlds, rather than deep space. It actually read more like a murder mystery and political thriller and the only SF part of it is that it is set on the space station and involves ETs, or are they really? It is more about people in a given situation rather than hard core SF and consequently spends a lot of time with the telepathic protagonist agonising about her situation and the people she is involved with. That is ok, it still held my interest, but the answer to the mystery hanging over the whole plot is never revealed and I can only come to the conclusion that the author plans a sequel. Bantam PB 2002.

Helena has become very keen on Stephen Baxter's novels, so I had to give him a try and took down what I think is his first novel, *RAFT* from my shelf, which I have been intending to read for years. My first impression was that it reminded me of a Larry Niven novel, drawing on hard core, speculative science to the Nth degree. We find a group of humans surviving an incredible deep space situation, endeavoring to survive in orbit around a nebula, a scenario which it seems could only be dreamed up by a theoretical astronomer on LSD. Well, that is exaggerating a bit, but Baxter paints a picture of an environment that is as bizarre as any fantasy writer could dream of. However it makes a great story and I enjoyed it. Grafton/Harper Collins HC '91, but I am sure it has been done in PB by now.

MERV BINNS

MORE FROM HELENA:

These days it seems that to be a successful author of 'hard' science fiction (in other words, the variety extrapolated from a world obeying the laws of physics as we know it - more or less - rather than one that makes up its own rules as it goes along) it helps to have a surname beginning with the letter 'B'. At *AUSSIECON 3*, the World Science Fiction Convention held in Melbourne in 1999, local readers were fortunate in being able to meet three members of this distinguished group - the Guest of Honour, Professor Gregory Benford, Ben Bova and Stephen Baxter. All three authors have in recent times produced intriguing novels on themes of possible developments in the exploration of the solar system in the near future, extrapolating from current knowledge and trends in science and technology.

In his book *THE MARTIAN RACE* (Orbit), Benford explores the idea of a competitive push for a manned Mars mission that is driven by commercial motivations rather than the political imperatives that powered the 'Moon race' of the 1960s. The title of the book is cleverly chosen and has implications beyond the immediately obvious. In Bova's *Mars* novels (Hodder) also there is constant pressure upon the scientists and explorers to justify the Mars missions to the people who provide their funding. Although very different stories, their novels have many elements in common, in the technology used and some of the discoveries made by the scientists on Mars. They both see the way things are likely to develop in the near future. The message of both is clear – we have the capability to explore Mars right now, if we really want to.

British author Stephen Baxter, winner of the 'Seiun' Award at AUSSIECON 3, once aspired to be an astronaut. His comprehensive understanding of the complexities of astronautics, and of modern physics, gives his science fiction great depth and authenticity. His great novel *TITAN* conveyed the inimical hostility of space to human life. *MOONSEED* was a stark warning about the potential perils of nano-technology (a theme that also dominates Ben Bova's *Moon* novels). His 'Manifold' trilogy: *TIME, SPACE, and ORIGIN* (Harper Collins/Voyager), present a larger-than-life awe-inspiring but chilling vision of a universe governed by unimaginable forces, not all of them benign, that conspire to shape and reshape the 'manifold' of time, space and life that determines the nature and destiny of all things. His anthology *PHASE SPACE* brings together stories that enlarge upon these themes and others such as possible variations upon human evolution. *DEEP FUTURE* is a non-fiction work that explores the future possibilities of advances in science and technology, and speculations about the origins and future of the universe and of intelligent life, that he uses to such effect in his fiction.

Ben Bova is the former editor (following in the footsteps of the legendary John W. Campbell) of *ANALOG Science Fiction*, and longtime friend and supporter and vocal advocate for NASA and other space enterprises, public and private. Ben's prolific output of eminently readable space adventure tales, set in his own envisioned near future and soundly derived from present-day technology and cutting-edge research, continue to intrigue and delight a readership hungry for reality-based science fiction in a medium increasingly dominated by fantasy.

Although each novel stands alone and can be enjoyed in its own right, the experience of reading each of them is enhanced by the continuity between them. In *RETURN TO MARS* the central character from the first book *MARS* returns years later to pursue his quest on the red planet. The emphasis in these two books is very much on adventure in search of scientific knowledge. In *MOONRISE* and *MOONWAR*, apparently set about a generation later, the emphasis has shifted to the commercial uses of space flight and the colonisation of the Solar System. But there is a linking character from the *Mars* books (though there has obviously been a bit of chronological fudging to make this possible). There is a family connection to some characters from the *Moon* books in *VENUS*, which is set a generation later. However it was a bit disconcerting to have received this one before *Moonwar* and *THE PRECIPICE*, the first of his 'asteroid' novels, which chronologically follows *Moonwar*, and introduces the parents of a character in *Venus*. Some others who are major characters in the *Moon* books are mentioned in the background in *The Precipice*. The exception to this linking of the books through characters in them is the latest of his that we received, *JUPITER*.

JUPITER

by Ben Bova

Published by NEL (Hodder and Stoughton) in 2001 PB

ISBN: 0 340 76765 0

Price \$18.95

JUPITER, though set in the 'universe' of Bova's broad vision of the near future that encompasses his *Moon*, *Mars*, *Venus* and asteroid based novels, otherwise has little in common with them. It stands apart from his sweeping saga of warring commercial dynasties to explore the dark side of a future in which scientists struggle to do meaningful research under the stultifying restraints of the religious fundamentalism of the governing 'New Morality'.

The protagonist, Grant Archer, is not one of Bova's usual heroic astronauts, visionary entrepreneurs or scions of financial empires, but a naïve young scientist, gifted but impoverished, who accepts a scholarship to fund his doctoral studies in return for a future four years of 'Public Service'. In the course of his studies he meets and marries the love of his life, Marjorie, a fellow scientist. Grant expects to do his post-doctoral Public Service in his chosen field of astrophysics at Farside Observatory on the Moon, separated from Marjorie doing her biochem post-doc service back on Earth, but not so far apart that they can't have a meaningful conversation and the occasional conjugal visit.

Alas, the young lovers find that there is no such thing as a free lunch, especially where the New Morality is concerned. Upon graduation with honours, Grant finds himself posted to research station *Thomas Gold*, in orbit around Jupiter, to spend the next four years in indentured servitude to the New Morality, in a job having very little to do with astrophysics, and separated by over 700 million miles of space from his bride.

As with all good tales well told (and Bova, like Clarke, is a master story-teller), just when things become really obnoxious for the characters, they become most interesting for the reader. Jupiter, like Venus, is an implacably hostile environment on a vast scale that offers no mercy to puny earthlings questing after clouded mysteries. But equally threatening on a human scale are the forces brought to bear on our hero by the prevailing authorities and by factions among his colleagues. In addition to telling a gripping story of a truly harrowing 'descent into hell' comparable to that in *VENUS*, Bova takes the opportunity to explore the moral conflicts besetting a scientist who is a sincere religious believer but who cannot allow the blind imposition of dogma to deter him from his search for truth.

JUPITER has to be on the "must read" list for all true fans of Ben Bova's fiction, and for anyone else who enjoys a classic hard SF story that allows the imagination to range free while not overstepping the boundaries of the laws of nature.

HELENA ROBERTS BINNS

Star Trek Novels:

THE ASHES OF EDEN, THE RETURN, AVENGER, SPECTRE and DARK VICTORY

by William Shatner with Judith Reeves-Stevens and Garfield Reeves-Stevens Pocket Books

This is a series of six books which, although nominally self-contained, really constitute a continuing story, beginning with THE ASHES OF EDEN, THE RETURN, and AVENGER and concluding with PRESERVER, which I haven't yet seen. And I might as well tell you up front, SPECTRE and DARK VICTORY, the first two volumes of the second trilogy, are both cliff-hangers, and neither of them makes a whole lot of sense without the preceding volumes. So if you are thinking about it, read the lot, starting with THE ASHES OF EDEN, or at least with THE RETURN, then AVENGER, then SPECTRE and DARK VICTORY, in that order. Hopefully by that time PRESERVER will be available to complete the second trilogy, so you can read that before you've forgotten what happened in all the others.

These books are nominally authored by Shatner, though he does acknowledge the contribution of his co-authors, who I suspect probably did most of the actual writing. I have read a couple of books in Shatner's TEK series, and reading them is like listening to him talk, with a lot of his characteristic quick wit and quirky humour. This is not quite so apparent in this series, though a lot of the actor's ego and personal foibles make their mark on the product, and also his understanding of the characters and their relationships, and of what constitutes an authentic Star Trek story.

The first one in this series that I read was THE RETURN, and I found it quite a powerful story, well written and suspenseful, that skilfully brings together the central characters of original and new Trek - including the resurrected James T., who it seems would require considerably more than a stake through the heart to put an end to him for once and for all - in a classic 'Kirk saves the universe' Star Trek scenario. It would have worked well as a movie. In fact, if Paramount had decided to bring Captain Kirk back from the dead after GENERATIONS, this would have been the way to do it. I'm sorry to report that the 'prequel' THE ASHES OF EDEN and the subsequent books, although still readable and entertaining, exhibit a subtle but steady decline from the high standard set by THE RETURN. With each successive volume, more of Shatner's idiosyncrasies are portrayed as Kirk's, which I guess is bound to happen when an actor claims a character as his own personal franchise. And even though the scope of a story may demand that it be spread over more than one volume, I believe that in fairness to the reader the publishers should disclose that each book is really only one instalment of an unfinished saga, and not completely self-contained. It would be difficult to get too specific about SPECTRE or DARK VICTORY without giving away the plot, other than to say that the continuing story gets more convoluted and complex, and brings in characters not only from DS9 and VOYAGER (sort of) but also from the Star Trek 'Mirror Universe', a source of endless fascination to fans since its introduction in the original series episode "MIRROR, MIRROR".

I believe that this series of books will be of interest to any reader of novelised Trek, as they stand up quite well in comparison with many other efforts in this field, and are filled with action and suspense, as one would expect from the dynamic duo, Shatner/Kirk.

GREETINGS, CARBON-BASED BIPEDS!

by Arthur C. Clarke

Published by Voyager (Harper Collins) Large PB 560 pages

ISBN: 0 00 648369 0 Copyright & first published 1999

This book should be welcomed by all fans of Arthur C. Clarke, one of the few science fiction authors whose name is instantly recognisable to members of the general public, as much as a great communicator of scientific and technological concepts (and occasional prophet of the future!) as the author of some of the world's most memorable science fiction.

GREETINGS, CARBON-BASED BIPEDS! is more than just another anthology, it is a significant overview of Arthur C. Clarke's lifetime output of non-fiction. As he explains in his preface, Clarke had for years resisted all attempts by editors and publishers to persuade him to undertake the daunting challenge of assembling such a comprehensive collection, but he finally succumbed. With the help of his family and colleagues, and of his editor, longtime friend Ian Macauley, and Macauley's family, he tackled what he calls (with good reason) the "mammoth task" of compiling and editing this single-volume representative selection from the archives of his almost seven decades (up to 1999) as a professional author.

Since they first appeared, many of these articles have been reprinted in other collections, some of them many times. However, this should not deter the prospective buyer of the book. Those who have read some of these items will be familiar with Clarke's practice of sometimes updating his articles to include comments upon more recent scientific or technological advances, or of using an earlier published work as the basis of a later one. Clarke knows that we know this, and in his preface takes pains to assure us that in this case each piece is presented "much as it first appeared in print", and the author's comments upon its relevance to future developments etc. are confined to footnotes.

The 88 pieces (if I've counted correctly) are presented in chronological order, divided into decades, (with more inclusions from the '90s than any other) beginning in 1944 with an insightful tribute to Lord Dunsany's wondrous works of fantasy, and finishing appropriately with Clarke's 1999 "The Twenty-First Century: A (Very) Brief History", in which for the last time in this volume he goes into the prophecy business in a big way, in a wry semi-fictional extrapolation of current trends into a future timeline, culminating in the discovery of a means of making interstellar travel a practical reality, ending with the punchline: "2100. History begins...."

HELENA ROBERTS BINNS

And here the reviews, and this issue, end.

MERV and HELENA BINNS