

**ERG 124**

**QUARTERLY**

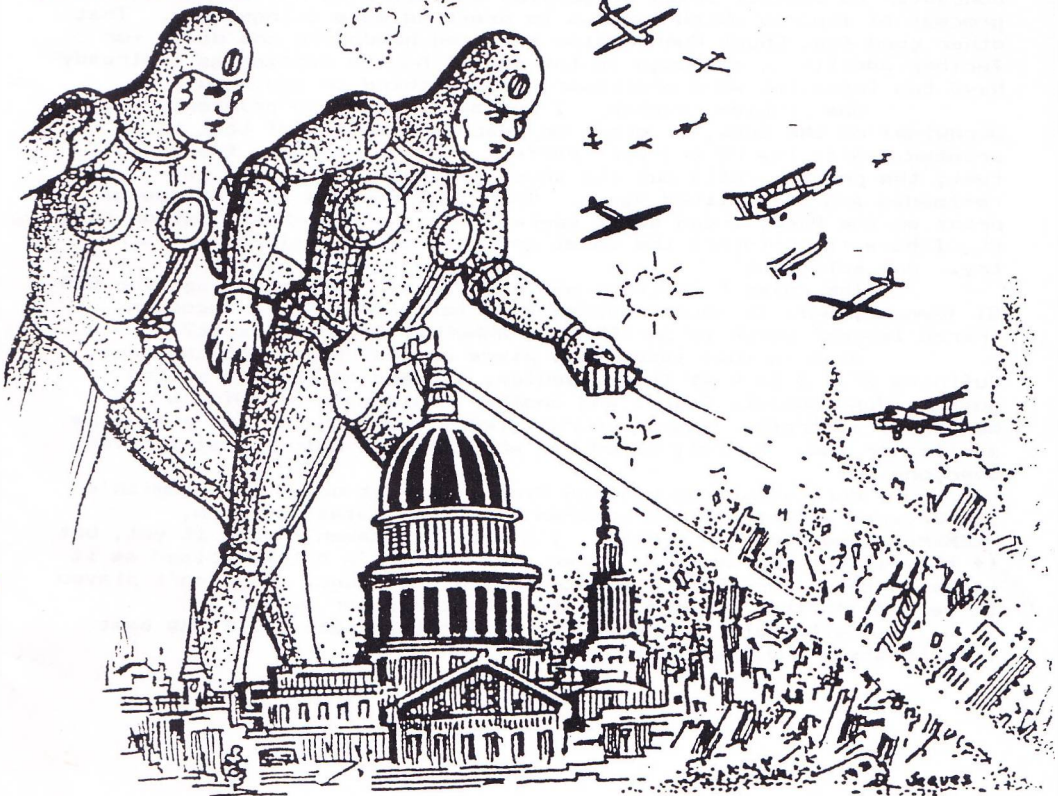
**January 1994**

# TALES OF WONDER

**AMAZING**

**SCIENCE**

**FICTION**



# ERG

QUARTERLY

Number 124

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## THE FINAL FRONTIER ??

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HOW CAN YOU GET ERG? Respond to this issue with a LOC. No response and I'll assume you're not really interested in future issues.

Greetings Ergbods,

The Question Marks in the heading are caused by the latest Postal Hike for overseas Printed Papers. The Basic Rate has gone up from 24p to 48p. Could this herald the heat death of UK fanzines? See 'Interesting Items' for further comment.

My new PC flourishes, even though I'm still learning how to use everything. That good man, John Rupik made the safari from Doncaster to install loads of goodies and start me off on the slow process of finding which buttons to press to make things work. That other good fan, Chuck Connor also supplied handbooks and discs for further additions, although in the end, I had to decline as I already have two installed word processors (and a third on the Beeb).

One problem remains. I use an Epson FX-80 printer. With Wordwise+ on the Beeb, it stops on reaching the end of text to be printed. With the PC and Word Perfect 5.1, on reaching the end of text, the printer rolls out the sheet of paper and has to be re-loaded and initialised again. Thus if I want to test a line of print on the Beeb, I can do it several times on one sheet, but on the PC, I have to re-insert the sheet and initialise again after each try. Any solutions?

The cover this issue was one I did eleven years ago for ERG 81 (January 83). It seemed appropriate to re-tool it to accompany 'First Issues' which is on TALES OF WONDER. Do you like it?

Also in this issue is a piece on that hoary old chestnut, defining SF. A look at Time Capsules, a piece on that forgotten author, John Russell Fearn, and another instalment of Weird & Wonderful aircraft. Plus of course, letter box notes and a fanzine mention or two. A truly mixed bag which I hope holds something for everyone.

More about the Lensman Video. I went down to W.H.Smith's and ordered a copy, titled LENSMAN - not the latest edition, (LENSMAN: The Director's Cut'), I'm afraid. Haven't seen it yet, but if this is the one Doc's daughter sued over, I'm not surprised as it is definitely 'our' Galactic Patrol with additions. I haven't played it yet, so further comment will follow at a later date.

Well that about wraps it up for this issue, all the best for Christmas and the coming year.

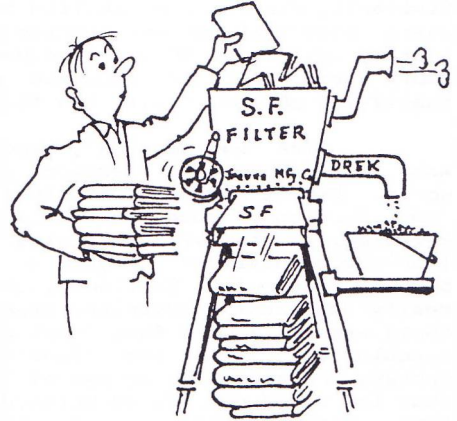
Yours,

# DEFINING

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## SCIENCE-FICTION

What IS SF? Throughout the years, writers, editors, fans, Uncle Tom Cobley and all, have tried to create a catch-all definition - a sort of filter screen into which you drop a chunk of literature and only SF falls out of the bottom. Right away, I'll stake my money on there never being any such definition. The best attempt I've ever seen, came, I think, from John W. Campbell. "SF is what I point to when I say, 'That is SF' ". I don't think that can be bettered - for JWC, but sadly, we all tend to point to different things when saying it, so it isn't much use as an infallible yardstick.



Why is SF so difficult to pin down? Well, I always think of a light spectrum. Unless you're colour blind ('visually chromatographically challenged' if you prefer), it is easy to point to red, orange, yellow and so on. It is NOT so easy to point to the exact spot where red ceases and orange begins or where orange gives way to yellow. The blend is imperceptible. Literature is much like a spectrum but instead of colours it splits into genres - Detective, Western, Romance, Adventure, War, Sea, SF and others. To make matters worse, unlike the linear spectrum, these can all merge into one another. A Poirot story is definitely 'Detective', whereas Sherlock Holmes verges on Fantasy. Horatio Hornblower was featured in Sea stories -- or were they Historical -- or Warfare? Was 'Helen O'Loy' SF or Romance -- or both? My point is that some stories overlap into other categories and it becomes impossible to pin them down to one.

A further complication arises depending on when a story was written. Consider a story of a moonshot which goes wrong. Facing almost certain death, the crew pull off a string of technological tricks to stay alive, tricks worthy of an 1930s epic by Campbell or Doc Smith. As the world watches and listens, they achieve the impossible and return home safely. Written in, say 1930 that would have been front line hardcore SF. With the flight of Apollo 13, it became current news and is now just a historical event. That old fictional stand-by, the ray gun has arrived in the shape of the laser. Dick Tracy's wrist radio is not only a fact, but includes TV and a microcomputer! Ten years ago, it was often said that a computer would never play chess; nowadays, even Grand Masters crumble before them. Other favourites have quietly slid from fiction to fact -- atomic bombs, nuclear energy, man-powered flight, da Vinci's parachute, the TV 'phone, organ transplants and many other everyday wonders no longer automatically qualify a yarn as SF.

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Would the story of a research scientist discovering a marvellous cure for AIDS or Cancer qualify as SF? Most people would say it does -- but if you replace those medical problems with Syphilis, then Dr. Ehrlich came up with a cure, many years ago - they even made a film about it with Edward G. Robinson in the title role. Similarly, Fleming's Penicillin is history, not future fiction -- so where does that put any stories about wonderful medical cures? Does a story qualify as SF only because it hasn't yet come true? It would seem that an accurate definition would have to contain the qualifying phrase, "...at the time it was written".

The 'Bat Durston', bacover ad on Galaxy showed how easy it was to transpose a Western yarn into an adventure on some other world. Did it become SF simply by re-naming the central character 'Jet Durston', mount him on a thot instead of a horse to herd his alien animals and pit him against a band of bow-and-arrow wielding, four-armed natives? Maybe we need a new category for 'Western Science Fiction'. Similarly, Sprague de Camp's 'Zamba' stories were really just action-adventure stories with a different background. It could also be argued that 'Lest Darkness Fall' was merely historical speculation. Even the 'Dune' and 'Pern' sagas are less SF than Fantasy, re-site 'The Voyage of The Kon Tiki' on another planet and that too would qualify as Science Fiction. All in all, it would seem that location has as much to do with defining SF as does story content, and plot.

Humanoid robots are still marginally SF, as are artificially intelligent computers and the human exploration of other worlds. Time travel, Extra-Terrestrial contacts and voyages to the stars and other dimensions are likely to remain forever in the realms of fiction -- but I wouldn't like to bet against any of 'em. In any case, SF doesn't have to be based on the wonders of science. Yarns such as 'The Death Of Grass', 'The Midwich Cuckoos', 'Odd John', 'Sinister Barrier' and many others manage without great dollops of technology. Eric Frank Russell's 'Dreadful Sanctuary' hinged on a secret society wherein the members were convinced they were a cut above everyone else. Nazis, Fascists, National Front members, etc. have similar ideas yet their activities are far from science fictional.

How many yarns have you read wherein the remnants of mankind are struggling back from post-atomic-war barbarism? Replace the atom bomb with germ warfare, a 'conventional' world war, a plague or a series of natural disasters and that scenario could be just as likely without being plugged as SF.

It's easier to say what SF isn't, than what it must be. It isn't *just* science, space travel, technology, biology, robots, monsters, and so on. No matter what definition you come up with, I fancy it will always be possible to find a few stories which fail to conform to the parameters you set, but which are still widely accepted as SF.

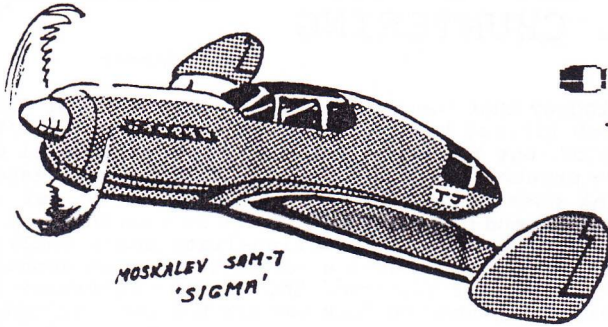
Let's face it, we all know what SF is -- provided we don't discuss it with anyone else.

===== T.J.

## GENERAL CHUNTERING

*Ken F Slater*

I meant to tell Ethel Lindsay that the prosthetic prophesy book was *LIMBO* or *LIMBO 90* (USA/British titles) by Bernard Wolfe, published 1952/53, when I saw her at *NOVACON*, but I forgot. But if I recall the novel was more about folk getting prosthetic enhancement for fashionable reasons rather than for medical ones. Incidentally, Joyce is due to get the second "knee job" around the end of this month. There is a vacancy... As Alan Sullivan points out, economics and waiting-lists don't apply so much in techno-utopias. But you can fault a lot of fiction on economic grounds - including sf, f and 'tec fiction. Unless it is necessary for the plot, no-one is ever hard-pushed to fork out for the taxi, ticket to Luna Orbital Station #7, or the pedalling purple person who operates the ricksha-type vehicle on Cygni 61/III. I often think that if I was caught up in one of these escapades I'd be out of the plot a paragraph later for lack of readies. Speaking of *NOVACON*, I managed to get to two programme items: the Awards ceremony, and the GoH address. Steve Baxter opened out his talk with some comments on the attitude of many people today to the scientific approach, and their willingness to accept strange things like psychic powers, crystal balls, alternative medicine, corn circles, and many like matters without question. When I was young the witchcraft laws still applied; didn't stop people reading the cups and cards. The gullible have always been with us. I imagine the "piece of the True Cross" racket would have rivalled government production of "How to be a Responsible Dog Owner" and similiar pamphlets as a timber resource waster. When I was about 18 I found it impossible to chat to many of my friends on a lot of topics - how do you talk to someone about the possibility of spaceflight when you discover he has not the slightest idea of what a planet or a star is? Someone quite prepared to accept that "stars" were holes in sky, or small things that reflected sunlight, or any other explanation you cared to offer. It was a matter of no interest. He would take the simplest solution; planets and other suns made for complications. Yet the same chap was far from politically naive. Schooling in that time did not go into astrophysics, but one did get some basic data if only to explain elementary things like finding the north star, and how come the seasons and the moon's phases. He would have had at least that, and conveniently forgotten it as soon as school was finished and it wasn't forced on his attention. I think the attitude is the same today. "Science" is what enables you to change channels on the TV without getting out of your chair. An "expert" showed you how to do it. Another "expert" tells you that if you wear a copper wristband it will allow helpful earth emanations to cure your rhuematics. Now, the first case will keep right on happening until the battery goes flat, or you drop the tool and step on it. The second case may work - I have known cases and this may be just the placebo effect - but another "expert" will tell you it useless. Personally, I don't know if any controlled experiment was ever conducted, but to the "open" mind which has no way of obtaining evidence to make a judgement, the copper band can appear just as likely a cure as the white pellets which the other "expert" tells you to swallow. And "science" does (appear to) get a lot of things wrong. Some of those little pellets have - er - backfired. Large establishments that have been stated perfectly safe have been found to be just a little bit lethal. People, tho, have no interest in "pure science"; only in results. Political results, which can make science go either way.

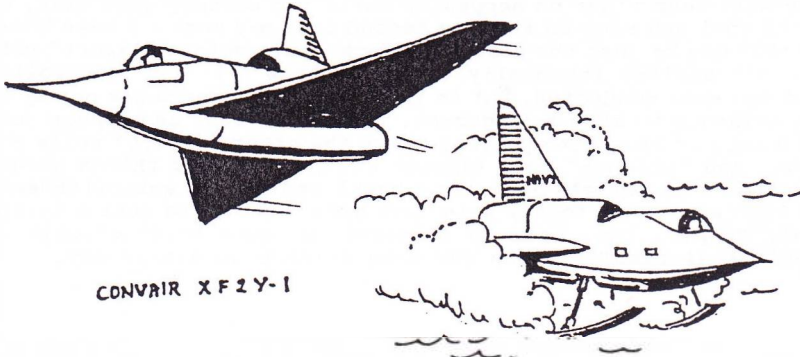


## ODD JOBS

The Second World War saw the advent of such great fighter aircraft as the Spitfire, Hurricane, Me.109 and Mustang. In earlier episodes of this series I've mentioned some forgotten fighters such as the Fairey Fantome, the Martin Baker machines, the Japanese 'Shinden', the German 'Pfeil' and others which narrowly missed fame. This time, I want to start off with a Russian aircraft which might well have given them a run for their money.

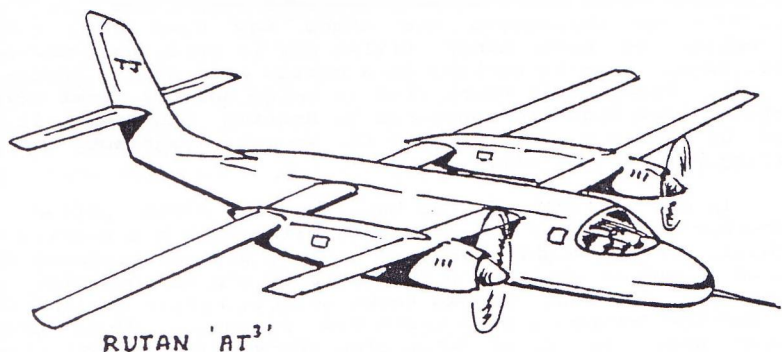
The Moskalev SAM-7 'Sigma' was designed in the mid thirties and was a tail-less two seater aircraft of all-metal construction. Its low-set, trapezoidal wing had vertical end-plates in place of a conventional rudder. The power was only 750hp but its estimated speed was no less than 302mph. Not bad when you remember it was a two-seater and that the first single-seat Hurricane powered by 1130hp could only reach 308mph! The Sigma was reported stable in flight; the rear crewman operating a pair of aft-firing guns whilst the pilot controlled the two forward ones. The prototype flew in 1936, but sadly, it was considered too radical in design so the project was terminated.

Another might-have-been record-breaking fighter was the Convair XF2Y-1 'Sea Dart'. In 1951, the US Navy signed a contract for two prototypes of a delta-wing, jet-powered fighter with a watertight hull allowing it to float on water! The contract was later extended to an extra 16 production machines. On take-off, when sufficient speed was reached, the Sea Dart's hull rose out of the water supported on two waterskis which retracted into the hull once it was airborne. The idea was that there would be no drag from the more usual seaplane type floats, thus allowing higher speeds.



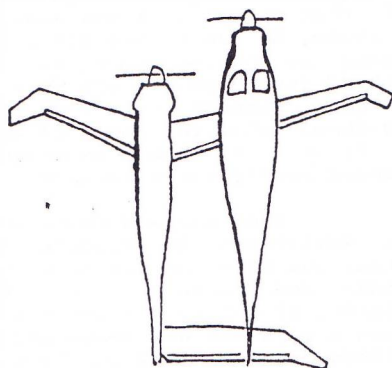
The XF2Y-1 was the world's first seaplane jet-fighter and had a maximum speed of no less than 825mph at 30,000 feet and a range of 513 miles. The wingspan was 33ft., but the prototype crashed whilst demonstrating at an air display. The design was perfectly succesful, but nevertheless, the contract was cancelled and only two machines were built.

Earlier on, I described a strange looking light plane, the 'Vari Eze'. That was the brainchild of Burt Rutan, a character noted for his unusual designs. In the late eighties, he produced the ATTT (AT<sup>3</sup>) - the Advanced Technology Tactical Transport. As a precursor of a full-sized machine, he built a 2/3 size test aeroplane.



It had tandem wings linked by podded engine nacelles which also carried fuel and also housed the undercarriage gear. The wings contained fast-acting, trailing-edge flaps which were operated late in the take-off run to boost the plane into the air. Much use was made of composite materials and powered by Pratt & Whitney engines, the first flight took place in 1987. I have no information as to what became of the project, but the full-size machine was to have had a range of 2,400 miles, cruise at over 300mph and have a good STOL performance.

If that one isn't weird enough, how about Rutan's 'Boomerang'? A Stateside friend sent me a copy of a page from the August 2nd, 1993 edition of 'Aviation & Space Week Technology'. It describes the weird design as a twin boom design with the right boom holding a five place, pressurised cabin and one engine. The left boom holds the other engine and any cargo. The wing has a forward sweep (what about torsional effects?). Estimated range is around 1500 miles at a cruising speed of near to 300mph. Once again, much use is made of composite materials and hopefully, it could be flying by now.



# FORGOTTEN HERO

Who was the most popular SF writer of the pre-war era? Was it Campbell, Smith, Heinlein, van Vogt or Asimov? Certainly, any one of those giants might qualify, but then again, that particular crown may well belong to 'The Blackpool Wonder', John Russell Fearn (1908-1960) whose prodigious output was spread over at least 32 known pseudonyms and there may have been others! Hiding behind so many other titles may in part, have served to limit his fame. Despite working in a cotton mill and a series of other jobs, Fearn still found time to write and his first effort, 'The Intelligence Gigantic' appeared in Amazing Stories. It was followed by 'Liners Of Time' and its sequel, 'Zagribut' and then his writing really took off.

In pre-war days, Edmond Hamilton was often called 'The World Wrecker' because of the frequency with which his stories used that theme. Fearn might have been given a similar nickname as he too was no slouch at destroying the Earth or wiping humanity from its surface. Instead, he was known affectionately as 'The Cover Copper' for the frequency with which his fantastic yarns grabbed the cover spot. His first Astounding story, 'The Man Who Stopped The Dust', (March 34) faced mankind with a runaway machine destroying all dust. In 'The Blue Infinity', (Sep.35) he saved Earth from disaster by simply moving it, first to Alpha Centauri, then to another universe altogether!

'Brain Of Light' (May.1934), 'Dark Eternity' (Dec.37), 'Deserted Universe' (Sep.36), 'Metamorphosis' (Jan.37) and The Brain Of Venus (TWS) all saw great disasters facing mankind -- and JRF wasn't afraid of letting everyone get killed off for a downbeat ending if that suited his plot.

Before beginning this article, I ploughed through no less than 195 anthologies to see which of his stories had been selected for that honour. I was amazed that I could only find one, either by Fearn, or one of his alter egos. That was 'Wings Across The Cosmos' by 'Polton Cross' in 'A Treasury of SF', Crown. Of course, with 32 pseudonyms, I may have missed one, but in his 'Appreciation of John Russell Fearn', Philip Harbottle only mentions that title and three other instances of anthologisation which I don't have in my filed. It seems an unusual fate for one whose writing career spanned nearly three decades.

Just why was Fearn so neglected in his later years? He was well-known to readers in the UK, not only from the American pulps, but also for his work in Scoops, Modern Wonder, Tales Of Wonder and Fantasy. His writing career lasted until the late fifties, if not longer and included a string of British paperbacks.

Even a magazine was named after one of his pseudonyms - 'The Vargo Statten Magazine' was quarto sized, and mainly featured juvenile, slam-bang action sf, with a good fannish coverage - My photograph and a write-up appeared in one issue.



In addition to writing for the SF pulps, Fearn not only turned out Western, Detective and Mystery yarns, but also hit the Canadian market with his 'Golden Amazon' tales in the 'Toronto Star Weekly'. These had originally been stories of the superwoman 'Violet Ray' and had first appeared in 'Fantastic Adventures'. Revised and polished, they found a ready market in the Canadian paper and even saw posthumous hardcover publication with reprints as late as 1975.

Admittedly, a hack writer, but one with talent, Fearn once confided to me that in later years, he kept on top of his prolific output by dictating his stories into a recorder and sending them off for professional typing. He seldom, if ever revised his work. In the course of conversation in the mid fifties, he also admitted that now that his earlier stories were out of copyright, he was re-jigging them for post-war readers.

One reason for his fall from grace stemmed from his becoming identified with certain house-names. Fearn's tales under the Vargo Statten, Volsted Gridban and Astron del Martia by-lines were well in his normal vein and highly readable for their era. The snag was that other, lesser writers were churning out hackwork for the publishers who freely shovelled it out under the house names which had become identified by Fearn, thus gaining him a wholly undeserved reputation as a writer of hack rubbish.

Admittedly, Fearn was no great shakes in the science department. In an interview in Walter Gillings' 'Scientifiction' (October 1937) he was credited with 'spending long hours in the public library studying the works and theories of Jeans, Eddington and Einstein'. It couldn't be claimed that he absorbed more than a smattering of these concepts, but using their buzz-words as a starting point, he would extrapolate and double-talk us into accepting the most outrageous storylines as scientists conducted improbable experiments, giant brains grew on Venus or research into finding what lay beyond death extinguished all life on Earth. What Jeans, Eddington and Einstein might have thought of all this was never discovered.

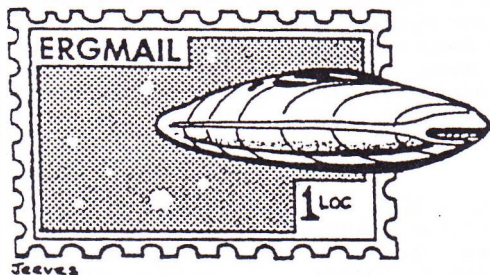
Similarly, although Fearn's mathematics only seemed to encompass the most basic principles of arithmetic, that didn't prevent him from producing 'Mathematica' and its sequel 'Mathematica Plus', wherein his characters found a telepathic metal which materialised thoughts. They dreamed up a big-brained future human called 'Pelathon' and together set off in search of the origins of mathematics without ever needing more than the four rules of number. Nevertheless, the two stories scored very highly in readers' ratings. In the Gillings' interview he said of them, "I got the ideas for 'Mathematica' whilst under gas at the dentist's."

That's a useful hint for aspiring writers. Fame is waiting - if only you start out with enough teeth.

==== TJ====



'PELATHON'



ALAN BURNS, 19 THE CRESCENT, KING'S RD. STH.  
WALLSEND, N.TYNESIDE NE28 7RE

Your article on facts v opinions caused me to leap straight into the saddle of my favourite hobby horse, re organisations like the Race Relations Board and such. Odd is it not, that those who claim that only whites can be racist are all whites, coloureds don't trouble, and have good and bad among them.

In the paper a day or two ago, the anti-racists criticised the puppet film Captain Scarlett because the goodies were headed by Colonel White and the baddies by a Captain Black. **Q** Have you ever heard of a white person complaining to the Board that a coloured has discriminated against him? **A** Re. Ken Slater, the only criterion I have for a story is, 'Does it end happily?', if it doesn't, I don't want to know. **Q** Surely Heinlein's 'GULF', and Hubbard's 'DEATH'S DEPUTY' were good yarns, to name but two? **A**

DEREK PICKLED, 44 RODLEY LANE, BANKFOOT, W.YORKS BD5 8LI

I agree with your comments on teenage jobs and am tired of seeing their parents complain in TV interviews that Social Services won't do anything to control their offspring - there seems to be no acceptance that they have primary responsibility. A little more discipline in raising their children and not buying them noisy toys and then allowing them to play with them in cafes without any consideration for others might instill some responsibility. The article on Thrilling Wonder Stories brought back happy memories. At one time I had subs to both TWS and Startline Stories, the illos were great - it was remarkable what the absence of gravity did for young ladies' bosoms.

VINCE CLARKE, 16 MEADOVER WAY, WELLING, KENT DA16 2BN

Aeroplane bit: I remember odd prophecies warning about planes metaphorically hitting a brick wall if they exceed the sound barrier. **Q** I recall an early Air Wonder Stories yarn which used just that point to explain missing aircraft. **A** About the Lensman Video, I now find (Leonard Maltin's Movie & Video Guide 1993) that the video mentioned will be of The Lensman (1984 Japanese), which did not apparently penetrate our shores. Maltin says, "Unfortunately, the film plays like a mediocre rip-off of Star Wars; the computer generated animation sequences are interesting to watch but don't move the story along. For comic book buffs only." **Q** Shame, it might have been interesting to see what they did with ol' muscles **A** I envy you the copier good enough to reproduce the miniatures of the Wonder Stories art youu show! **Q** It ain't mine, I photographed the covers and sent the pics to me daughter who did copies on the office machine - and these were then pasted into the master sheets and re-photographed by ERG's printer. It's a wonder the artwork survives. **A** I totally agree with Ken Slater - fantasy is the adult fairy-tale, where they all live happily every after at the end **Q** Until the inevitable Dark Lord returns for another trilogy **A** I wonder if that's what so depressing in modern grittily realistic SF? **Q** That, plus the lousy artwork and minority disadvantaged anti-hero/heroines. **A**

ETHEL LINDSAY, 69 BARRY RD., CARNOUSTIE ANGUS, SCOTLAND, DD7 7QQ

I am amused at your fact and opinion article. To take an example nearer my home, I bet you would say it is a fact that smoking kills people, whereas in my opinion if everyone stopped smoking tomorrow, the death rate would continue as usual. @> NO FAIR! You're using two different points .. yes, smoking kills, and possibly the death rate wouldn't change much - people would still die of other causes, but that doesn't invalidate the fact that smoking kills. <@ It is also my opinion that Nature has her own way of dealing with Earth's overpopulation. Stop people dying of Tuberculosis and AIDS appears. Again, it is my opinion that in this country we are all living too long. It is a fact that the ageing population is putting too great a strain on our economy. @> Very true, but what do you propose Ethel, compulsory euthanasia on reaching retirement age? <@

ROGER WADDINGTON, 4 COMMERCIAL ST., MORTON, MALTON, N.YORKS YO17 9ES

Certainly in this politically correct era you might have phrased the 'Geriatric's Quiz' a little, differently; perhaps 'A Quiz For The Seasonally Challenged'? @> Why not 'A Quiz For the Chronologically Challenged'? <@ I could appreciate the first issue of Thrilling Wonder Stories; was there ever such another line-up as that, for its era? @> Dunno, we'll have to see what crops up in future 'First Issues' <@ I'm inclined to agree with Ken Slater that the principal attraction of fantasy is that there is a happy ending, that Good can triumph over Evil. I had thought that it might be the easiness of fantasy compared to SF, that it was far simpler for thousands like me to understand a magic sword than a satellite in geosynchronous orbit; but I can certainly see the other attractions now, their upbeat endings compared to the many dooms of science fiction. Oh, if only I could accept fantasy below the standard of Tolkien, and if only I wasn't so enamoured of spacemen, and great spaceliners cruising between the stars... But (re your Recent Books), what is it with all these vampires? @> Ghu knows, but nowadays people seem to like wallowing in blood. <@

PER NILSSON, SPECHTSMEG 18, ZIMMER 413, 44801 BOCHUM, GERMANY

@> I hope I got your address right, these Continental Is are just like 7s <@ I don't know which fact is the silliest; the law change, or voluntarily refraining from using a crash helmet. It may be the Sikh who gets his head bashed in, but a crash helmet would certainly save him and society (who'll have to pay the medical bills. I was immensely relieved to see that I was too young to enter the Geriatric's Quiz - I scored 3 points with Earhart, Piccard and Blondin. @> I ran it to show just how ephemeral some once household names can really be. <@

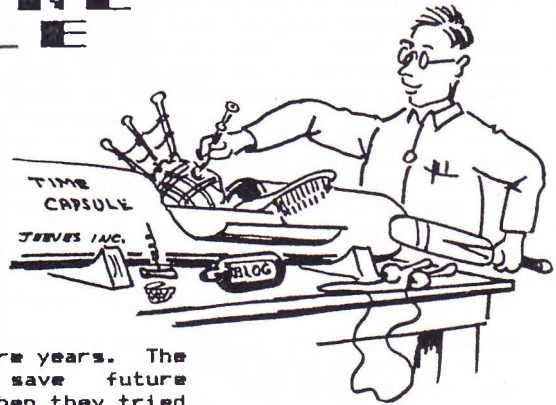
HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, P.O. BOX 5309, TORRANCE, CA 90510-5309, USA

I notice you get a bit of a snit about Sikhs wearing turbans. @> Only when motor cycling <@ We had something like that in the USA when Sikh postal workers wanted to wear their turbans at work. They got the OK to do so, and for some strange reason mail service has not been affected in the slightest way. More and more people at the Post Office are wearing ethnic attire for a variety of reasons. I cannot, as an Electronics Technician the rule is we cannot wear skirts or dresses at work - and the kilt is considered a skirt under Post Office Regulations. The worry is that I am going to get careless and get my \$375 kilt caught in belts and machinery. Sure I will, snort!

@> My objection to the turban rule was against any minority group getting laws changed just for them. I wonder if the turban offers as much protection as a crash helmet? <@

# TAKE ONE CAPSULE

Just before the war, and for a couple of decades after it, a popular activity was to shove a 'Time Capsule' under the foundations of some new building. Sundry items of the era were vacuum-packed, etched on copper, placed in plastic, or protected in some other way before being entombed for a, hundred, a thousand or even more years. The theory being that it would save future archaeologists a lot of work when they tried to find how people lived in the 20th. Century.



Nobody seems to have given a thought to the escalating rate of progress and other changes which might render such treasure troves inaccessible. After a post-atomic war, the technology may be lacking to crack open a concrete crypt. Power sources to run equipment may no longer be available - or of a different type. Even more likely, our 'modern' records may be unplayable due to new systems. Molecular recording, gene manipulation, nanotechnology and quantum physics are just coming on the scene, what changes may they bring?

Almost exactly ten years ago, I wrote an article for Paul Skelton's HELL, listing my own selections of items for encapsulation. Looking at it now, I find it interesting to see what changes have already occurred to nobble my selections. It seems a good idea to have another look at my selections in the light of new developments.

I decided to ignore prophecies of doom and abandoned the idea of filling my capsule with bows, arrows, knives and knobkerries. Since museums are already cramming their crannies with much modern junk, I tried to include many items which are so common, we simply use 'em and throw 'em away. Historians digging up Rome may unearth a scutum or two and a few sesterces, but never recover the Roman equivalent of a betting slip or a bikini. Likewise, future generations will have preserved Hondas, crumbling newspapers and photographs of important things such as Ted Heath and the Empire State Building but wonder who wore the Boston Red Sox, or what goods were sold in the Common Market.

No tiny beryllium-copper torpedo for me, my junk will be ensconced in a gigantic vault, thus avoiding any size problems. My choices go like this:-

1. Model kits a selection of aircraft, ships, cars, trains etc. Models are ephemeral (especially when Val is dusting), so kits are a much hardier and easily packed way of showing what things looked like.
2. Rarities samples of things which the future may lack - a lump of coal, a can of petrol, a flask of fresh air, a bottle of sea-water. The last two would allow for comparisons with the future products.

3. Trivia Things we chuck away and a few years later, wish we had kept - such as magazines. I have a 1935 Radio Times which offers a garden shed for thirty bob (£1.50 for you newcomers). In my capsule I'd stuff Exchange & Mart, fanzines, throw-away leaflets, and things like mail-order catalogues.

4. A Sound & Vision System

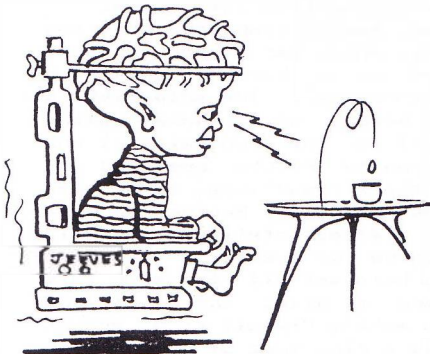
5. A Complete TV, film and tape library

Ten years ago I advocated a 16mm optical sound projector, films and a standard two-track tape system playing at 7.5"/sec. In that ten years, video recorders and cassette tape players have taken over a very large slice of the market. 16mm is dicky, Standard 8mm and Super 8mm films are virtually dead and you can no longer buy a reel-to-reel domestic recorder, only highly expensive professional models are around. EPs have gone, LPs are succumbing to CDs and with digital recording in ROM cartridges due any day, record players as well as video and cassette recorders may soon vanish.

6. A Large Generator to supply 250v 50c/s to power items in 4.

This would have a drive shaft sticking out at one end so that it could be rotated by whatever power source was then in use (Hard lines if it proves to be slaves on a treadmill.)

7. Full-size anatomical models and recordings of standard body temperatures and other details. Looking at paintings by 'old masters', I often wonder if people really did have flat-noses and faces like bladders of lard. With gene fiddling in vogue, tomorrow's human may differ even more, so an idea of current standards might be interesting.



TELEKINETIC TIDDLEY FLICKER

8. A Compendium of Games and stack of joke books to allow people to see how we passed the time and amused ourselves. Once upon a time, Christmas meant some misguided relative producing a 'Giant Games Compendium'. Blow-football, Ludo, Draughts, Snakes & Ladders and so on. Children of the future, reared in test-tubes may lack such sadistic relatives, so I'd include every known indoor game. Who knows, it may start a 21st Century Craze for telekinetic tiddley winks

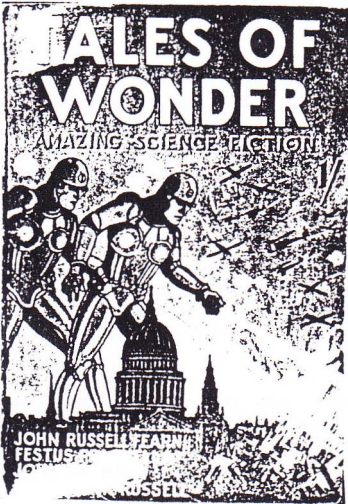
9. Samples of energy-wasting devices

In addition to refrigerators, freezers and vacuum cleaners, I'd add electric tooth brushes, dish washers, answerphones and so on. They might like to know why they have an energy shortage.

10. A Library of Books on how we planned to reach the Moon, the Planets and finally the stars. It should make for a good laugh.

Of course, I keep having that nigging thought that all oil, coal and other fuels might have been used up, and our descendants lacking the forces to break through all the concrete protecting my capsule - unless of course they've cracked nuclear fusion, isolated Britain behind total barriers, deafened everyone with the noise of wind farms or fried them with microwave radiation from orbital power stations. Then again, tastes change, they may not even be interested in their past. Looking at some aspects of the world around me today, I can't say I'd blame 'em.

# TALES OF WONDER



I came across the first issue of Tales Of Wonder when, as a teenager on holiday, I passed the newsagent's window where the copy was displayed, several times before deciding this might be the same stuff as my beloved copies of Astounding, Amazing and Wonder. That was July 1937, the mag cost me a shilling, was published by World's Work and edited by Wally Gillings. The only interior art was a standard printer's 'filler pattern' or two, but the cover depicted two armoured giants busily destroying London. The story, 'Superhuman' by Geoffrey Armstrong (John Russell Fearn) told of two babies who had been made into giants by regular injections. Their reign of terror was finally stopped by turning them into stone.

'Seeds From Space' under Fearn's real name, had Martian weed covering Earth and a weird scientist with a ray which paralysed everyone. Things looked grim until the weed acted as a bumper against a terrible meteor storm, then dissolved into powder. The scientist (a Martian) kindly de-paralysed everyone before going home again. 'Revolt On Venus' saw adventurers set off for the Moon, miss it and get almost to Mars before they were captured by robots operated by Venusians. Taken to Venus, they smashed the air machines, turned off the robots and escaped home. 'Man Of The Future' by Festus Pragnell concerned an experiment with glands which created intelligent animals and a superman, leaving the reader to imagine the results. 'Monsters Of The Moon', by Francis Parnell, saw the hero set off to save his girl from bounding Lunar creatures and a giant snake. In the process, he discovers a lake of ice, thus making himself rich enough to wed. Eric Frank Russell introduced a nice spot of humour with 'Prr-r-eeet', a tale of an encounter with an alien. In 'Invaders From The Atom', from Maurice G. Hugi, dwellers on an electron world expand to invade Earth but are defeated by Relativity. Finally, 'The Perfect Creature' by John Beynon, had three eyes, three legs, four arms and chased an RSPCA inspector - but drowned because it couldn't swim.

The yarns are totally pedestrian by modern standards, scientists build spaceships, create monsters and save worlds, all from the safety of their backyard laboratories. Nevertheless, in the SF-starved pre-war days, TOW was a wonderful shot in the arm -- and best of all, an advertisement on page 39 led me to subscribe to Gillings' fanzine 'Scientifiction' and thus make contact with SF fandom. I still have that first issue of TOW, and a set of Gillings' Scientifiction and his other fanzines. They make a nostalgic read.

# WHAT'S WRONG WITH ANALOG?

I started reading Astounding way back in 1932 and have stayed with it through all its changes in title, size, editors and attitudes. My collection lacks only six issues, but after this sixty year love affair, I'm seriously thinking of cancelling my order for the magazine.

Looking back at all those happy years, there was never a decade when I wouldn't have been ready to defend my favourite magazine against all comers. True, there many shoddy yarns, some duff artists and a general lack of sophistication, but they had life, pace and sparkling ideas which made you think about the concepts involved. Nowadays, I find far too many of Analog's stories downright tedious and frequently unreadable. I quit after half a dozen pages. This happened with 'SENATOR SPACE CADET' in the November issue. Page after page of political fiddling to elect a President who would support space development. I finally peeked at the end - he got elected. 'FROM THE CORNER OF THE EYE' was one of those argument in a bar things which again turned me off. The lead story concerned Middle East type terrorists on another planet - ho hum. As for SPACPT. VU, A girl grows up, goes into space, her daughter does likewise so they sell the house ('Spaceport view'). Only four stories, but each one a clunker.

Once upon a time, stories had a plot which built to a resolvable climax - which didn't have to be a happy one. Nowadays, we get a line of waffle culminating in a fade-away ending which leaves you saying, 'so what?' A common line being, "Mary gazed at the VDU and wondered what tomorrow would be like". Pardon me while I retch.

Give me a well plotted tale, interesting characters, a good climax and a logical ending, preferably with a twist not forecast in the first few lines. Instead of this, the modern Analog serves up polemics or messages masquerading as 'stories'. Dolphins - or their alien equivalents must be saved as must the ozone layer and fossil fuels. Minorities of all ethnic groups, shades, creeds, and social attitudes must be praised and protected. Ethnic villains are to be avoided unless it is made clear that they are not typical of their race.

It is a good plan to replace heroes with heroines, preferably black, have churlish, unshaven live-in lovers or better still, are lesbians, disadvantaged use drugs and have a neurosis or two, so much the better. It also helps if they are crippled (sorry, physically disadvantaged). All these aspects are perfectly legitimate starting points on which to hang a yarn. The world has many such characters wandering around, if an author wants to discuss them, he (or she) should see that they become involved in interesting activities. Instead, far too many writers simply thump away at their message and give us a trite, lifeless story line.

Then there's the 'artwork', well it's rare to find an illustration which depicts a scene from the story it is supposed to illustrate. Instead, we get loads of faces, or occasionally two or three figures standing aimlessly around before a nondescript background. Take the November and December 1993 issues of Analog. The first has five or six drawings. One shows a fuzzy alien, a second has a man carrying an unconscious girl to a sketchy vehicle, another shows the back of a girl looking at a spaceport and the rest show simply faces or single characters. The cover depicts a man tending fruit. The December issue is even worse, out of seven illos, six show large sketches of faces and the seventh is a crudely drawn moon crawler. This is SF illustration?

Whatever happened to illustrators like Schneeman, Brown, Wesso, Cartier and others who gave us some wonderful renderings of incidents from the yarns. One look at those and right away, you wanted to read the story to find out what was happening. Look at the Paul illo on the right, dated maybe, but doesn't it grab your attention? You get no such buzz from Analog's current crop of face drawers. All are technically competent (though Aulisio overdoes the gloom), but none of 'em can illustrate a story.

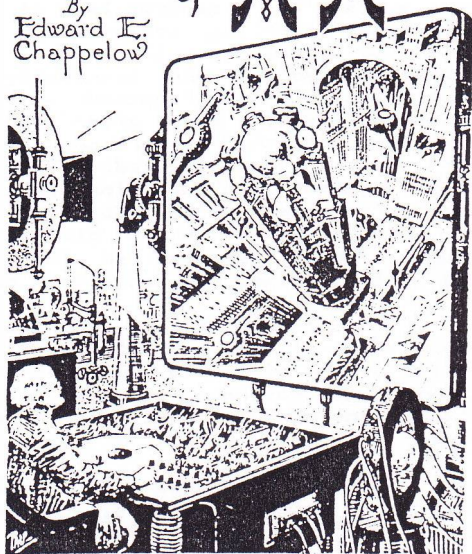
Articles used to be a high spot, but nowadays one needs to be a biochemist, a nuclear physicist or expert in some other field of science to understand half of the material presented. Cramer's 'Alternate View' is usually lucid and well presented, Stine tends to set up straw men for target practice and Schmidt's editorials whilst interesting don't make up for the general 'flabbiness' of Analog.

I suspect that much of the trouble on the story side stems from the simple fact that science has outpaced science fiction. In the old days, most readers had a smattering of electronics, understood the mechanics of space travel, and could argue intelligently about Relativity, the mechanics of the atomic bomb and other SF staples. Nowadays, scientific progress has left most of us standing - and that includes the writers; they don't have enough grounding to involve science in their yarns, so they replace it with messages. Even when a scientist writes SF, it often employs concepts which baffle the average reader. All of which could explain why fantasy seems to be taking over. You can invent whatever you like and no nit-picker can say you got the science wrong.

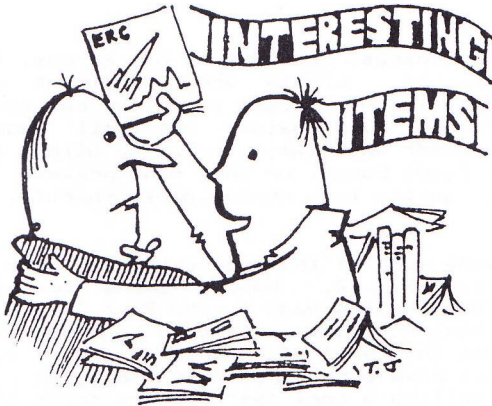
As for the rotten artwork, well all I can offer to explain that is laziness on the part of the artist. Put it all together and the bottom line has me asking why I keep buying the magazine. Habit I guess.

## The Return of the Air Master

By Edward F. Chappelow







*Of the fanzines and other missives which thump through the letter box, most are available for 'the usual', i.e. A LOC, trade, or faunching letter (it helps to enclose stamps if possible. Most of the following come into these categories but one or two want cash - if so, I've indicated the amount.*

THEN.4 ROB HANSEN, 144 PLASNET GROVE, EAST HAM, LONDON E6 1AB

Around 280 mimeed Qto pages (no illos) go to make this massive fourth instalment of Rob's epic (if occasionally biased) history of UK Fandom. This volume is devoted to the Seventies and to cover such a wide range means much must be skipped or by-passed. Nevertheless it's superb labour of love. No price given, so try grovelling - it's worth it.

POSTERN.2 PETE PRESFORD, ROSE COTTAGE, 3 TRAM LANE, BUCKLEY, CLWYD, N.WALES CH7 3JB

Sixteen A-5 pages, card covers and photo-offset. Devoted to castles at home and abroad. Main coverage is on Skelbo and Oystermouth castles plus several in Italy. You also get notes on other local places. Nice, friendly and NOT dustily academic.

REDISCOVERIES NEWSLETTER 9,10 &11 MARK HARRIS, 3712 N.BROADWAY, CHICAGO, IL 60613, USA

A-4 in size, and photocopied. Devoted to publishing its readers' views on the books they treasure the mosr, be they SF, Horror, S&S, Classical, fact, fiction or mainstream. An unusual and entertaining departure from the more usual fannish book reviews. Fascinating for book lovers, try a faunching letter if you want copies.

SCIENCE FICTION FOR SALE, a 2,000 plus collection of vintage Science Fiction starting way back in 1926 and moving onwards from there. For details write or send your Want List to David Allen, 74 Henty Close, Worthing, Sussex BN14 7HF

BSFA LIBRARY Ever wondered what happened to it? Well back in 1971 its fannish custodian ran out of space in his house so it was put into the care of the Science Fiction Foundation and kindly stored at the North East London Polytechnic. In 1992, the Poly gave the Foundation notice to quit so the collection (which is no longer called 'The BSFA Library') has now been moved to Liverpool University in the care of Andy Sawyer. Good for Liverpool U. as they are running an M.A. course in - guess what? SCIENCE FICTION! Don't apply, you need a starting degree in Eng. Lit. I gather its mentor, David Seed, is 'not interested in pulp sf' according to the article in the INDEPENDENT for Monday, October 11th. from which I culled the above information. Oh yes, there's another little snag, I believe BSFA members can no longer have access to the Library - can anyone confirm or deny all this?

IT GOES ON THE SHELF. 10, 32 A4-pages, comes from Ned Brooks, 713 Paul St., Newport News, VA 23605, USA. Little artwork (front and back covers), but crammed with a delicious mixture of letter responses and views on a variety of different, and mainly off-trail books. Read of a Persian book collector who always travelled with a 400 camel train just to carry his 117,000 books, or the man pressed to death for refusing to plead guilty to a charge of witchcraft. A really enjoyable read.

POSTAL INCREASES The TV news made much of the recent MPs pay rise of 2.4% against a cost of living rise of 1.4%. Nobody seems to have noticed the giant leap against fankind made by the Post Office in their Printed Paper Rate. The basic cost of mailing up to 20gms that way has risen from 24p to no less than 48p! A whacking great 100% jump. Both the 24p and 35p rates have gone. How does that grab you? It certainly grabs ERG as mailing a copy overseas now costs more than two and half times the Inland Rate.

Printing ERG costs about 56p per issue. Add on postage and inland copies will now cost me 75p and overseas ones £1.04 a time. I can't sustain that cost, so something has to give. For a start, I'm cutting the print run this issue and drastically pruning the mailing list. Sorry folks. but the Post Awful looks like doing what six years of asthma and five major operations failed to do, namely ending ERG's 35-year run. Ah for those happy days when a ream of paper cost about 40p and once could mail out a fanzine to Japan for less than it cost to send it across the city.

PEEL-OFF STAMPS Another Post Office money spinner is the issuing of special stamps. These became so prolific that I stopped collecting them eight years ago. Now they are plugging the 'great new idea' of adhesive-backed, peel-off stamps which don't need licking. Only this is, it's not a new idea. Somewhere in my collection I have a set of peel-off stamps issued many years ago by, I think, Sierra Leone.

BOOK & MAGAZINE SELLERS This seems as good a time as any to include a list of people who can supply you with supplies of SF. If contacting them, don't forget an S.A.E.

K.F.SLATER, PO BOX 23, UPWELL, WISBECH, CAMBS PE14 9BU

MIKE DON, 233 MAINE RD., MANCHESTER M14 7WG

KEN COWLEY, TRINITY COLLEGE, 153 OLD CHURCH RD., CLEVEDON, AVON BS21 7TU

SIMON GOSDEN, 25 AVONDALE RD., RAYLEIGH, ESSEX

ZARDOZ BOOKS. M.FLANAGAN, 20 WHITECROFT, DILTON MARSH, BA13 4DJ

TERRY JEEVES, 56 RED SCAR DRIVE, SCARBOROUGH YO12 5RQ

RON HAYCOCK, GLENMORE BOOK CO., 17E PITSFORD ST., HOCKLEY,

BIRMINGHAM B18 6LJ Ph (021) 554 9002

ANDY RICHARDS, COLD TONNAGE BOOKS, 136 NEW RD., BEDFONT, FELTHAM,

MIDDX TW14 8HY

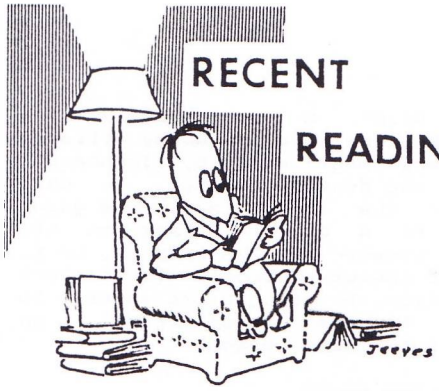
KIRK RUEBOTHAM, 16 BEACONSFIELD RD., RUNCORN, CHESHIRE WA7 4BI

ROBERT A MADLE, 4406 BESTOR DRIVE, ROCKVILLE, MD20853, USA.

Bob has a lovely catalogue, but sadly doesn't handle Access and levies a \$5.00 to \$10.00 excess charge for overseas orders. When you add the Bank's punitive £15.00 charge for sending money overseas, you're facing an extra twenty quid on your costs. Off-putting I'm afraid. Once upon a time, the GPO would transfer cash for \$2.40 a time, but now they too will soak you £15.00 or so for sending a mag sub abroad. Ain't progress wonderful, price out the little people as their orders aren't worth fiddling with.

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# RECENT READING



NIGHTMARE WITH ANGEL Stephen Gallegher

Coronet £4.99

When beach-comber Ryan saves neglected ten year old Marianne from the sea, she develops a crush on him - but he has a past and she is ordered to avoid him. She doesn't so her father falsely reports the man for child

molesting. Ryan and Marianne go on the run seeking her missing mother and gradually Ryan's guilty secret emerges, as does her mother's. A taut, real-world slowly escalating tale of terror which keeps you guessing until the end.

THE CHRONICLES OF PERN: First Fall Anne McCaffrey Bantam £14.99

Five episodes covering the discovery of Pern, a volcano's threat to the settlement, the creation of Ruatha Hold, a mating of dragon-to-rider and finally, rescuing Pern's last survivors (Where have I read this before?) There's no mention of the giant AI computer; the tales are virtually plotless with no baddies other than the harsh conditons and the inimical Thread. (Why hadn't it overrun Pern before settlers arrived?). Nevertheless, a good pot is worth boiling well, and McCaffrey does a smooth job of showing the gradual shift from a technology base to an agrarian one. Nice little hat-tip to vanVogt as one crewman is a 'nexialist'.

CRYSTAL LINE Anne McCaffrey Corgi £4.99

When a deadly new crystal is discovered, Killashandra and her lover, Lars investigate and find it sentient. They also acquire a personal 'brainship.' Both drop from the story until the end. After an excellent opening of mystery and danger, the pace slows as Killashandra starts to forget everything - (apart from numerous baths and showers). Good characters but some irritating inconsistencies - why do singers all try to be last out, yet covet the 'first out' parking slot? It starts well, but becomes pedestrian.

PROPHECY Peter James Signet £4.99

After a sadistic opening, the time jumps ahead to the chance meeting of Frannie Monsanto with Oliver Halkin (Lord Sherfield) and his son Edward. Their friendship is studded with a series of terrible accidents, whilst Edward alternates between puppydog frendliness and chilling cruelty. As the relationship strengthens, so does the terrible menace from Oliver's evil homosexual ancestor whose family motto is, 'I shall not altogether die'. A frightening tale of explicit violence and horror.

DARKNESS WEAVES Karl Edward Wagner ROC £4.99

The King of Thovnos had his faithless wife Efreli tied to a mad bull. Mad and deformed, she survived and now wants barbarian swordsman Kane to lead her forces to revenge. Sriving battles along the way, Kane takes up his new position and begins to organise her armies - task complicated by powerful magic and a jealous second-in-command. Violence, treachery and impossible odds in this S&S epic, but side narratives tend to slow the pace.

Isaac Asimov's CALIBAN Roger MacBride Allen Millennium £14.99

On the planet Inferno, Settlers and Spacers have an uneasy alliance to terraform the planet. Things are made worse by 'Ironheads' seeking to foment discord and Settlers who destroy robots. In this setting, Caliban is created without the Three Laws. He gains consciousness to find himself framed for a brutal attack on his creator. On the run and seeking to discover his own purpose, he is hunted by Detective Kresh and his robot assistant Donald. Their task is greatly complicated by colony friction, by roboticists seeking to hide Caliban's secret, and by a threat to the planet itself. An excellent read which holds you throughout. Recommended

ACROSS REALTIME Vernor Vinge Millennium £8.99

Livermore Labs control the force-shield 'bobbles' which cannot be opened. They have set themselves up as the Peace Authority, engulfing any government or faction opposing them. Wars break out and plague spreads. Wili Wachendon, a predatory, street wise mathematical genius is adopted by old Naismith, inventor of the bobbles. Wili creates a portable bobble weapon and revolt begins when it is discovered that time inside them is at a standstill. Future generations use this as one-way time travel to reach the far future. This is an amalgamation of two, 4-part Analog serials, Peace War (May-Aug 1984) and Marooned in Real Time (May-Aug 1986). Vinge is a master of hard core SF of immense scope and invention.

GRUNTS Mary Gentle Corgi £4.99

The final battle between Good and Evil looms with 18-stone orcs as Evil's front line. Their Captain, Ashnak, meets the murderous thieves, Will and Ned and steals a dragon's hoard of alien weapons which carry a spell to turn his men into hardened marines. Evil loses out, but Ashnak fights on, then the Dark Lord re-appears to force an election. Some lovely characters, including the cut-throat thieves, gutter language and a marvellous tongue-in-cheek S&S yarn which avoids laboured puns. Black humour and not for the squeamish, but a rattling good tale, I just couldn't put it down until the end

SONGS OF POWER Greg Bear Legend £5.99

Contains the two novels 'The Infinity Concerto' and 'The Serpent Mage'. 16-year old Michael Perrin passes through a portal into the fantasy world ruled by the Sidhe, strange creatures who come in various forms. Humans, lured there by music, are oppressed. Michael is trained by the weird Breed sisters as he struggles to make sense of it all and return home. In 'Serpent Mage', Michael, now 21 and living in L.A. finds he has been pursued by the Sidhe and must again tackle other dimensional horrors. An involved fantasy which is a welcome change from standard sword-toting heroes.

TOPAZ FIRE Brian Rayfield Legend £9.99

Despite being successfully ambushed, the barbarian Warchaw warriors use magic to defeat the attack of the hitherto invincible Chaw. Curos, a Chaw officer and wearer of a powerful talisman seeks aid from the forest-dwelling Dryadin, a gentle people, but who have periods of wild lust and cruelly punish any unsanctioned childbirth. They give him Xante, a beautiful and powerful woman sorcerer whose powers amaze the sceptical Curos as he finds himself raised to power.

A massive, 400+ page, trade-size S&S novel - with the hint of a sequel in the end.

LEGEND: A Graphic Novel David Gemmell Legend £9.99

Lord Ulric is leading his armies against the Drenai of the dying Lord Delnar whose daughter goes to enlist the aid of legendary warrior Druss. On the way she meets and weds Rek the Nomad. Druss recruits a Robin Hood type band and other unusual help, but treachery abounds and things look bleak but the mystic fighting priests of the 'Temple Of Thirty' add their powers. Some vicious jump-cuts indicate a heavy handed editor, but it's an excellent, well illustrated,



A-4 sized comic book - sorry, 'graphic novel' of epic battles.

DRUSS THE LEGEND David Gemmell Legend £14.99

Druss the mighty warrior who died defending the Drenai Fortress was too good a character to lose so swiftly. This tale relates his early adventures when as a newly-wed, his bride Rowena is captured by slavers. Her psi powers develop and she gets aid from Vintar, one of the mystic priests of the 'Thirty'. Druss, armed with his two-headed axe, 'Snaga' and aided by ex-soldier Shadak, sets off to the rescue. The trail leads through fights, duels and battles, each of which moves him one step further along the way to becoming the legendary 'Deathmaker'. An excellent 'super-hero' yarn crammed with action, colour, heroism and villainy. Probably one of the best S&S tales around.

WAYLANDER II: In The Realm Of The Wolf David Gemmell Legend £4.99

Waylander Dakeyris and his daughter Meriel live alone, but now someone has put a price on his head and Guild assassins led by the sadistic Morak come to earn the gold. The warrior, 'Angel' comes to warn Dakeyris and stays to train Meriel in battle skills. Tension escalates as the killers move in, but there are other mysteries behind the attack, as well as strange magic and deadly conflicts. An action-packed sword and sorcery fantasy, second in the Waylander series now re-issued at a popular price.

LORDS AND LADIES Terry Pratchett Corgi £4.89

Midsummer Day approaches when former witch, Magrat is to wed King Verence. Suddenly crop circles appear all over, the elves of the Fairy Queen are beginning to attack and a strange something has escaped from the magic circle of stones on Copperhead Mountain. Granny Weatherwax and Nanny Ogg try to sort things out, but one meets an old flame, the other an amorous dwarf before all is sorted out. Another multi-layered and involved Discworld novel which is the usual frenetic and amusing romp.

DARKLANDS Ed. Nicholas Royle N.E.L. £4.99

An eleven story collection of horror and strange stories. There's a sinister holiday home, a jealous woman, a proliferating salesman, an incontinent episode, paranoia, getting into a painting and others. Some of the stories grab you, lead you along, but then end. One (Road To Kensal) was incomprehensible, but 'Sweet Nothing' is a lovely little 'sting in tail' yarn. Overall a good read, with a few, modern, 'where do we go from here' pieces.

THE HARVEST Robert Charles Wilson N.E.L. 34.99

An alien ship orbits Earth, enigmatic artifacts, 'Helpers' stud the cities, blood counts go awry with alien organisms, then everyone hears the question, "Do you want to live forever?" Only one in ten thousand refuses the offer and the story follows Dr. Matt Wheeler, the psychotic Colonel Tyler and a handful of others as they seek to find what it is all about. Not the usual battle again impossible odds, saved at the last moment by the invention of technological gimmick, but a superb cliff-hanger which has you wondering throughout - 'Are the aliens baddies or not?' Highly recommended.

HARPY THYME Piers Anthony N.E.L. £15.99

Another (The 17th.) Xanth novel wherein harpy-goblin Gloha finds her way past three challenges to reach magician Humphry and ask for his aid in finding a mate. He fobs her off to find his second son and so begins a trail which includes the rejuvenated, (and amorous) 96-year-old King Trent and takes Gloha through a labyrinth of strange places, numerous dangers and encounters with many weird beings before finding her true love. Basically a fairy story for adults, plenty of abysmal puns and encounters with some old friends from earlier Xanth epics. This is in the old familiar vein, so if you're a Piers Anthony/Xanth fan, what more do you need to know?

VURT Jeff Noon Ringpull Press £5.99

The scene is a future, sleazy, Manchester where cyborgs, shadow snakes and telepaths are common. A high-velocity opening sees shadow and real police chase the 'Stash Riders', a small group of dropouts who live for Vurt drug feathers. The band has two women (one a telepath) and two men, one of whom, Scribble seeks his missing sister who vanished into the Vurt world to be replaced by an alien Thing. The trail follows a maze of drugs, trips, violence and four-letter words. If cyberpunk is your bag, here it is in spades.

THE TURING OPTION Harry Harrison and Marvin Minsky  
ROC £4.99

Brian Delaney of Megalobe Industries has made a breakthrough in Artificial Intelligence research. Hired killers attack his lab, kill his co-workers, steal all the information and leave him for dead. His brain is rebuilt using his own computer links and Brian sets out to finish his research and discover his 'killers'; a task helped by his first AI robot, 'Sven' A gripping extrapolation of today's science and AI. One of the best I've read on this theme. Get it!

SNOW CRASH Neal Stephenson ROC £8.99

America is a collection of city-state where Hiro, a sword-toting, super hacker, is a delivery boy for the Cosa Nostra controlled pizza industry. 15-year-old 'YT' helps him out of a tight spot and they become involved in following the trail of whoever is pushing a new hacker-attacking drug, 'Snow CRash'. The high-velocity trail involves action in the real world and the beautifully worked out, Virtual Reality 'Metaverse'. Historical musings slow the pace and without expletives the word count would fall dramatically, but the characters are excellent and the narrative gripping. Cyberpunk at its best.



**PAPER TIGER** have just issued a superlative set of art portfolios which should gladden the heart of every SF illustration lover without doing undue damage to the bank account. Priced at a very reasonable £10.95, each is of a massive A3 size (Double A4, 420x290mm), on slick paper with card covers:-

**THE JOSH KIRBY DISCWORLD PORTFOLIO** runs to 64 pages, opens with a photo of Kirby followed by a four page biography and then you're into 28 stunning paintings. No lettering overprints, but the back of each has a small black and white reproduction with title and other details. The artwork doesn't 'bleed' into spine or margins, so book vandals can cut out and frame any or all of the pictures.

**THE 2nd. RODNEY MATTHEWS PORTFOLIO** is of identical size, format and price and if anything, the artwork is even better, being more evocative of mainstream fantasy - and again, you can cut and frame.

The **PAPER TIGER** series also includes the 1st **RODNEY MATTHEWS PORTFOLIO** and others by **CHRIS FOSS**, **BRUCE PENNINGTON** and **JIM BURNS**. The set makes for a brilliant and affordable collection of top quality SF/Fantasy art.

From TSR (A Penguin Imprint) come three massive, trade-size volumes of the **DRAGONLANCE** tales by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman - that record-breaking pair who leaped from seemingly nowhere to take the fantasy world by storm with their tales of the world of Krynn.

**DRAGON LANCE CHRONICLES** £13.00 (1032 pages)

Holds, **DRAGONS OF AUTUMN TWILIGHT**, **DRAGONS OF WINTER NIGHT** and **DRAGONS OF SPRING DAWNING**, nicely illustrated by Beauvais and Butler. This is the trilogy which sees Krynn threatened by destruction.

**DRAGONLANCE LEGENDS** £12.99 (904 pages)

is the trilogy of the brothers Caramon and Raistlin. It contains **TIME OF THE TWINS**, **WAR OF THE TWINS** and **TEST OF THE TWINS**. Sadly, the illos by Valusek are rather mediocre.

**DRAGON LANCE TALES** £10.99 (700pages)

has the contents of three anthologies - **THE MAGIC OF KRYNN**, **KENDER**, **GULLY DWARVES AND GNOMES** and **LOVE AND WAR**, a total of some thirty tales from various writers and nicely illustrated by Fabian

If you've missed some of the tales or are a Dragonlance fan, here's your chance to acquire a complete and handsome library.

THE BOOK OF ALIEN Paul Scanlon & Michael Goss Titan £9.99

Quarto-sized and absolutely crammed with striking illustrations and photographs in both black and white, and full colour. Artwork by Giger, Foss, Cobb etc. plus production stills, working drawings from the film as well as behind the scenes in the workshops. The excellent text covers the film's origins, creation, model work and set building (No mention of van Vogt, Black Destroyer or Discord In Scarlet). There's even a complete Credit Listing. I have the earlier 'Giger's Alien', but this is a far better production, a real collector's item an deserving nothing but superlatives.

TERRY PRATCHETT'S THE LIGHT FANTASTIC Corgi £7.99

A Graphic Novel based on the Terry Pratchett story. A spell has escaped from the Octavo, a book of eight spells and lodged in the head of failed wizard, Rincewind. If all eight spells are not said before Hogswatchnight, Discworld will plunge into the Red Star. Rincewind, Twoflower, the Luggage, Cohen the Barbarian and the lovely Behan set off on a trail of adventures before the world bearing turtle changes direction. Well drawn, nicely coloured with typical Pratchett humour.

THE IRON DRAGON'S DAUGHTER Michael Swanwick Millennium £14.99

Jane is a changeling, child slave-labourer in a dragon-making factory where she works with trolls, dwarfs and other weird creatures. Escaping with damaged dragon, 7332, she is hunted, takes up shop-lifting, attends school and begins her unusual career. Her life is an escalating series of adventures, sex, drugs and magic, all taking place in a strangely distorted yet almost credible alternate reality. Highly inventive, always intriguing, never dull, it keeps you wondering what comes next. A very readable and different fantasy, with no tedious trek, evil Dark Lords, Magic Jewels, or sword-toting Princesses in sight. Read and enjoy.

THE STREETS OF ANKH-MORPORK S. Briggs & T. Pratchett Corgi £4.99

For Discworld fans, here is a huge (6 x A4 size) fold-out street map of the fictional city as well as a few family coats of arms. There's also a complete listing of main streets and places, keyed to the map, plus introductory articles by Pratchett and Briggs. Nit pickers will love proving, "You can't get to Kicklebury Street down King's Way". Not a story, but a must for devotees of the city on the world borne on the back of a giant turtle.

THE POSITRONIC MAN Asimov & Silverberg Pan £4.99

Following on from his re-writing of 'Nightfall', Silverberg has taken Asimov's 'Bicentennial Man' and expanded it into a novel. Robot NDR113 joins the Martin family as a general factotum and child minder but gradually becomes 'Andrew Martin' and proves himself an artistic woodworker. He builds up a bank account and wins a legal battle for 'freedom'. Being 'free' doesn't make him a 'human', but Andrew gets there in his own peculiar, and sad, way.

CHILLER Sterling Blake N.E.L. £5.99

Alex Cowell and Dr. Susan Hagerty work on cryogenic preservation have successfully revived a frozen dog. Their activities attract the attention of computer hacker, George, a religious psychopath and merciless killer. He joins forces with TV evangelist Carl Montana and begins a campaign of terror. A cliff-hanging novel of escalating menace and violence, but a bit too drawn out for my taste

MOVING MARS Greg Bear Legend £9.99

When Mars is colonised by family groups called Binding Multiples, Governor Dauble seeks unification. Casseia Majumdar and a group of dissidents oppose her, but then the Earth Government gets ideas. Years pass and Casseia studies politics and wins a scholarship to Earth while Charles, her first lover goes on to discoveries in higher physics with results which change many things. Casseia finds herself drawn into affairs which forever change the destiny of Mars. A block-busting, trade size novel, but one which seemed rather episodic in development.

ANIME: A Beginner's Guide To Japanese Animation

Helen McCarthy Titan £6.99 This 64pp, lavishly illustrated (much in colour) book opens with a brief lexicon of anime's 'jargon' words and a short introduction. Then you're into chapters covering anime's history, robots, Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Crime, Children, Toys and anime in Britain. There's also a listing of shops, clubs and magazines and five pages giving details of major productions. It's an excellent introduction to anyone interested in Japanese film animation and has some stunning visuals.