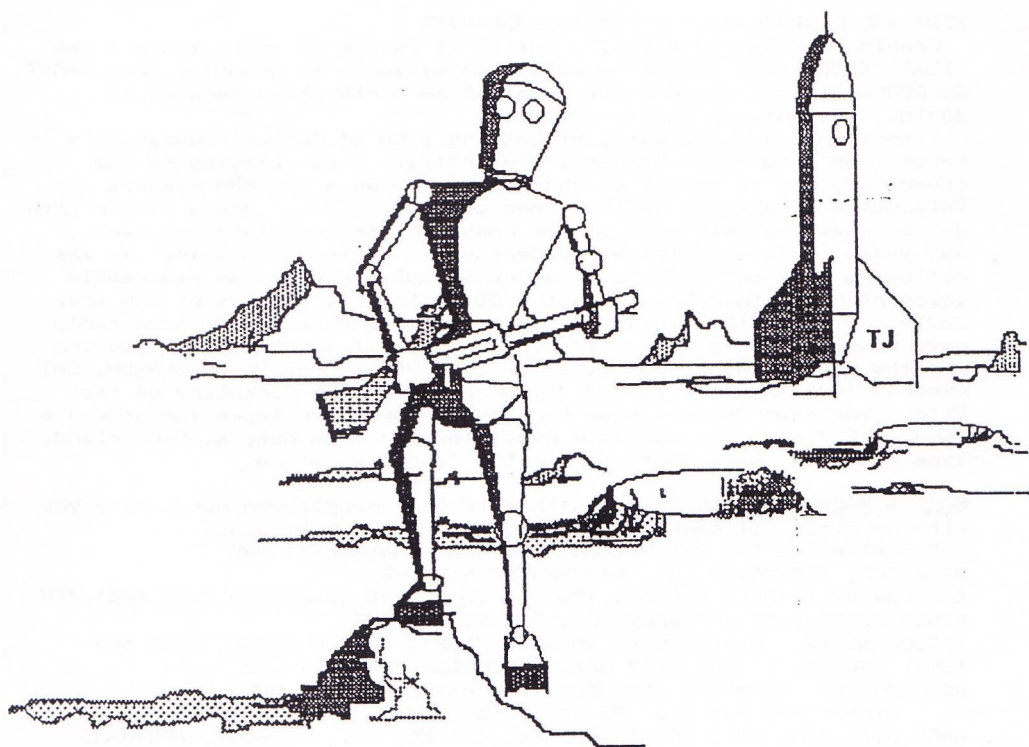


**ERG** 125

QUARTERLY

APRIL 1994

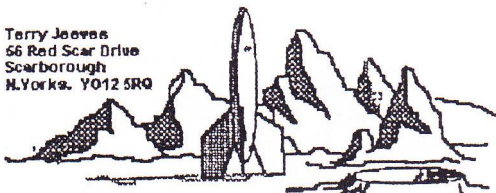
35th. Anniversary Issue



# ERG

QUARTERLY

Terry Jeeves  
56 Red Scar Drive  
Scarborough  
N.Yorka. YO12 5RQ



Greetings Ergbods,

Well first the burning question, HOW CAN YOU GET THE NEXT ISSUE OF ERG? Simple, just respond to this one with a LOC. (and three second-class stamps would be appreciated). No response implies that you're not really interested in future issues.

Several of the headings and illos, including the above, have been done with the new PC using 'Paintbrush' in Windows 3.1. I'd like to hear your comments on them.

## ERGITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Looking through my files, I notice it is now 12 years since I ran 'DOWN MEMORY-BANK LANE', my series on my early SF memories (Not CARRY ON JEEVES), so I wondered if it might be worth while running it again. Comments on that?

I mentioned a while back, of getting a CD of 'Chick' Henderson's recordings from James Verran in Australia. I was playing it the other day, and it struck me that there may be a few ERG readers interested in chasing up their own copies. 'Chick' was a singer with dance bands, notably that of Joe Loss, in the immediate and early, war years. His superlative rendering of 'Begin The Beguine' is the definitive version, and the final note amply demonstrates remarkable voice range. Other tracks on the CD include 24 goodies of the era. Sadly, he was killed in an air-raid, otherwise he would undoubtedly have been Britain's answer to Bing Crosby. I don't know if you can get the CD over here, but it's THE INCOMPARABLE CHICK HENDERSON, EMI Records 1991 (AXIS) 701707-2 Alternatively, the Secretary of the Chick Henderson Appreciation Society can sell you tapes for around a fiver. C.H.A.S., 91 Bathgate Ave., Townend Farm Estate, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear. Well worth it for the 'Beguine' alone.

BOOK & MAGAZINE SELLERS Herewith a list of people who can supply you with SF etc.. 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.

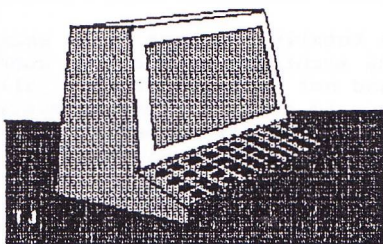
BRIAN AMERINGEN, 9 GRAHAM RD., WEALDSTONE, HARROW, MIDDX HA3 5RP

MARK NEGUS, SUGEN & Co., HILLINGTON HOUSE, 75 JEFFERSON ST.,

GOOLE DN14 6SJ Mark deals only in film & TV tie-in paperbacks.

BRIAN COCKS, 18 WOODGATE, HELPSTON, PETERBOROUGH PE6 7ED - Deals only in aircraft books.

All the best, Terry



## A BYTE AT A TIME

(My PC and i)

I acquired my new PC in September 1993. I got it from Messrs Horsley & Dawson in Drifffield, not only did I get a good price quote from them, but since their shop is only about 20 miles away I was able to drive over and collect it from them. I nearly got a parking ticket in the process whilst loading the boot up with the assorted boxes. Once home and recovered from carting everything up to the den, I manhandled the Beeb, its external disc drive, monitor and Epson printer to one end of my desk and began assembling the new computer's bits. A mainframe box with 38 processor, 4MB of RAM and integral 40MB-HDD with MOS-DOS 5.0 and Windows 3.1 already installed.

The 14" SVGA Monitor went on top of this, the keyboard and mouse sat on an extension flap to my desk and I began to plug in all the assorted wiring - Monitor to main frame, mains power, keyboard, mouse, printer, etc. Likewise for the Beeb, plus my Anglepoise lamp.

I have everything wired to one main power switch, so both computers, monitors and printer come on line together. Everything plugged in, time for the big event. Prayers offered to Ghu, Joss sticks burnt and I switched on. Wonder of wonders, everything worked first time.

The Epson did its initiation routine, the PC's hard disk drive whined to speed, the monitor began to glow cryptic messages of status and other details scrolled up the screen and finally, the Windows desktop appeared. Time to experiment; thanks to some heavy study of assorted library books, I had some vague idea of where to begin. Greatly daring, I pressed a key - nothing happened, I pressed more of the things and still nothing developed. A frantic 'phone call to Messrs H&D and I realised I had forgotten to unlock the keyboard. With that oversight remedied, I tried again - Success! In no time at all, I had played my first games of Solitaire and Checkers using the mouse. Then I did some drawing using the Paintbrush program. Great fun, I loved it and since then have spent many hours drawing sundry illustrations, many of them appear in this issue. The heading above was done on the PC, the one below was done just too late for my Christmas cards.



Season's Greetings

Happy Christmas one and all;  
 Let us hope the snow won't fall  
 If it does, please not on us  
 Or we will start to swear  
 and cuss

At this stage, I was totally clueless as to what else could be done with this marvellous machine, but good fan John Rupik made the trip over from Sheffield and not only installed all sorts of program goodies, but also gave me some idea of the mysteries behind directories, sub-directories, paths and filenames etc. -- I still don't understand it all, but hopefully, time will improve things.

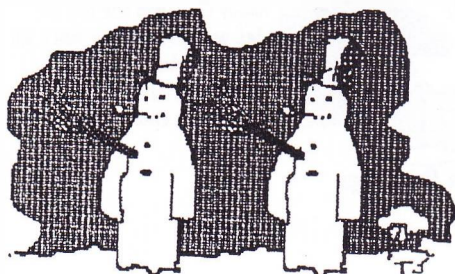
Not all the goodies proved to be unmixed blessings though. I still find using the Beeb and Wordwise+ is more user friendly than Wordperfect 5.1. In the first place, the W+ screen uses larger typeface, making it much easier to see what you have typed. In addition, changing sizes, underlining, editing, shifting, copying or deleting are much simpler than in Wordperfect. One the credit side for the latter are the scalable fonts and the ability to create tables of all sorts. Maybe time will bring greater flexibility, but right now I prefer W+.

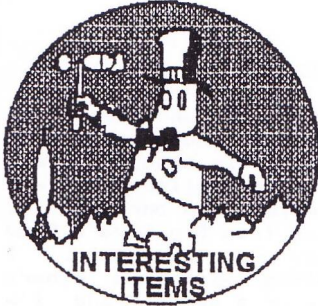
My favourite program is Paintbrush. Not only can you draw freely using the mouse, but with different line thicknesses, and techniques - airbrush, picture copying or merging, automatic circles, ellipses and boxes and even a dozen different type fonts in sizes ranging fro 8 point up to 72 point. There's even a 'Wingdngs' font which holds all sorts of pretty little fillos.



One great advantage of using the text tool is the ease of editing pictures plus text. Instead of having to fiddle to get text aligned by trial and error, you just type whatever you want, then use the 'pick' tool to align the words the way you want them before moving them up to fit alongside the artwork. That's how I did the X-1 plane heading and put the 'Marvel Science Stories' into the board held by the robot. Moreover, Paintbrush will put shading tints directly onto a drawing much more easily than one can do it using Letratone on a pen and ink illo.

I have a stack of manuals and 'Easy Guides' (Hollow Laugh) which is 10" high - no exaggeration. Gradually I'm learning how to format discs, change drives, open or save files and run sundry programs. The big snag is having to swap the Epson between the Beeb and the PC, bad enough changing the plug on the back, but reaching down inside to flip over a tiny DIP switch is tricky, so next purchase will be another printer. No doubt about it, PCs are addictive -- and I don't mean for playing games, but for the way in which you can create and achieve something. Moreover, it's great fun.





Well, for openers, Doc Smith fans may be interested in

LENSMAN A MANGA Video. 107 minutes. £12.99 The jacket tells me, "Our hero, Kimball Kinnison, is entrusted with a lens carrying crucial enemy data and battles to save the Galaxy from the tyrannical Helmuth." The video commences with a fast-cut, Manga commercial, 2 caption screens and a psychedelic pre-title sequence. Then the action begins. Kinnison (who is only around 15 years old, is given the

message-bearing Lens by a dead (!) Lensman. He joins Buskirk and Kinnison senior who dies to enable Kim to escape. Along the way, he teams up with Clarissa (now named Chis') McDougall, tangles with wheelmen and the giant, robotic Helmuth before getting the message mack to Admiral Haynes. Animation is often of the 'jaw moves, while everything else remains still' type, but moves so quickly and strikingly that you hardly notice. Story level uses much of the Galactic Patrol line, but with some interesting variations. There are even traces of Star Wars with an R2-D2 clone. Juvenile, yes; but plenty of fun. Not for s&c highbrows, just us plebs. I've only seen 30 minutes so far. More details when I've seen the lot.

EVOLUTIONARY RAG.2 comes from IDHB Inc., PO Box 370, Nevada City, CA 95959, USA. \$12.00 will get you six issues of this bedsheet size, tabloid format, 28 page near newspaper. Cramped with advertisements, both real and crazy (but highly plausible). There part of a Robert Sheckley serial, other fiction, much humour, cartoons, photos, pieces by Forry Ackerman etc. Much is made of 'Bardotown', but no word of what/where it may be. Highly entertaining and whacky.

ORMOLU.2 and GAIJIN come from Ann and Steve Green respectively, so you get two for one if you're lucky. Both editors write about Ann's recent accident and a family death, then ORMOLU (20 pages, ERG size) has a piece on Ghost Stories, a Novacom report a bunch of LOC and plenty of illos. GAIJIN has 16 pages, a lovely cartoon cover by Shep, an account of an unpleasant job, how Steve met Ann, a piece on 'music' and a good but brief lettercol. Two nice friendly zines which I hope will continue. The address to faunch them from is 33 Scott Rd., Olton, Solihull, W.Midlands B92 7LQ

When is 'FREE' notta da free? A recent issue of Practical PC, (at 99p an issue the cheapest on the stands) offered, "Subscribe for one year and get the next year FREE" On page 103 it said "£24 issues for £21.36 plus £££s of software free". On page 113 it offered, "Two years for the price of one - £23.40". Now my maths says one year at 99p should cost £11.86 and if year 2 is free, that should be the lot, so why £21.36 and then £23.40? I wrote the sub dept. pointed this out and asked what WAS the proper 'free' price and what about the software. They replied, but ignored my queries and quoted me, "Subscription for 1 year plus 1 year free .. £23.40" Can anyone out there explain the logic behind all this?

*Continued at end of LOCcol*

## LETTERS



TED HUGHES, 10 KENMORE RD., WHITEFIELD,  
MANCHESTER M25 6ER

'What's Wrong With Analog' was right up my street. A copy of that should go to Stan Schmidt - it might open his eyes. There's plenty of good stuff being published so why don't we see it in Analog. In our attic, I picked up an old Analog from Ben Bova's time and found I'd read only one story in it. I snapped it up along with two others containing instalments of a serial, and I'm enjoying a good old-fashioned read.

'Brass Tacks' full of comments on the stories; illos wondrous to admire, drawn by names to conjure with - Schoenherr, Gaughan, Sternbach, Freas. Will the current Analogs develop the same charm in twenty years do you think?  $\Rightarrow$  *Do you think people will still be able to read in twenty years?*  $\Leftarrow$  Your review of Tales Of Wonder' was more than kind. As you say, the mag was pretty pedestrian, yet authors like E.F.R. and Festus Pragnell wrote great stories. I think the stodgy layout made TDW lack sparkle. When 'Fantasy' came out later, it was a much livelier production.  $\Rightarrow$  *TOW aped the mags of its era, just stories with letterpress headings and minimal (if any) illos.*  $\Leftarrow$

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

Ken Slater's piece is OK of course, but would have read better with paragraphs.  $\Rightarrow$  *That was how Ken did it way back in the early fifties, so it seemed nicer to keep it that way.*  $\Leftarrow$  Interesting article on Fearn. I as in correspondence with Phil Harbottle some years back on the very point you mention - why did his popularity decline? It seemed to go downhill from '38 onwards. Phil was inclined to blame fans. For some reason they became set against Fearn and their voices overwhelmed the less vocal readers. I told Phil it seemed to me that Fearn just didn't advance in style - cardboard characters in a cardboard universe.  $\Rightarrow$  *I think you're right. JRF had grandiose concepts, but wrote simplistic SF around them.*  $\Leftarrow$  In the 'Time Capsule' you say refrigerators and freezers are 'energy wasting'. Huh?  $\Rightarrow$  *Well if you use up heat energy to cool something down, isn't that wasting it?*  $\Leftarrow$

ANDREW DARLINGTON, 44 SPA CROFT RD., TEALL ST. OSSETT, W.YORKS

The problem with nailing down a definition of SF is that the terms are not constant anyway and mean different things in different decades. Aldiss defines what he calls 'proto-SF' which is replaced around the time of Wells by 'Scientific Romance' before Gernsback coined 'Scientifiction' as a genre. Arthur C. Clarke accepts a confusion of labels allowing 'SF' and 'Sci-Fi' to be used interchangeably. To me, Sci-Fi defines next and current phase from the demise of the magazine market in the late 60s. SF is oriented towards magazine and novel fiction. Since then, Sci-Fi has expanded into every media - 2001, Dr. Who, Star Trek and E.T. are all Sci-Fi, yet are grounded in hard SF concepts. Comic Book stuff like Judge Dredd is also Sci-Fi, as are computer games. Although strict Science Fiction still exists, we now live in a world of predominating Sc--Fi.

$\Rightarrow$  *I agree with you, but SF is still in the mind of the beholder. Anyone using 'Sci-Fi' doesn't know what SF is.*  $\Leftarrow$

PHIL WILTSHIRE, 2 CHILTERN VIEW RD., UXBRIDGE, MIDDX UB8 2PA

The front page of Tales Of Wonder is good. Why didn't the big people just put their feet on the buildings and smash them down instead of blasting them away? @ Ah, but ray guns are much more scientific. @ Defining SF. I like the end bit, 'Let's face it, we all know what SF is - provided we don't discuss it with anyone else.' Two films spring to mind as 'cowboys in space'. 'Beyond The Stars', which was magnificent seven in space, and 'Outland' where Sean Connery was a dead ringer for Gary Cooper in 'High Noon'. Found the 'Forgotten Hero' interesting about the ups and downs of a writer I must admit I have never read much of. I have certainly never heard of John Russell Fearn @ Such is fame. @ although I will look out in second hand bookshops to see if I can pick up a story by him.

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

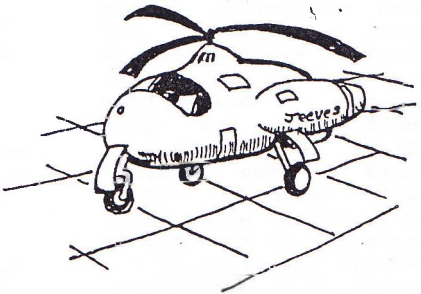
There's only one snag with time capsules. While they were cheerfully laid to rest for some future generation in some sylvan or verdant setting where they would last till eternity, all too often they've been dug up by recent posterity, wanting the space or the land for a housing estate or a new factory. In building your vault, never mind an atomic war, just remember that it might end up under a block of flats with people refusing to move just for the sake of archaeologists. @ That could be a problem, but with the way they build modern flats I don't think there would be much delay. @ One culture shock I had recently when renewing a subscription. The necessary dollar cheque through Girobank had gone up from £5 to £10. @ You're lucky, the GPO I used to use has risen from £2.50 to £15.00 and my bank wanted £17.00. Obviously they don't want small dealers. Many thanks for the useful clipping on alternate methods. @

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

I thought the definition for SF was when a writer though, "I wonder what would happen if..." @ Well that would make 'Black Beauty' and most other stories into SF. @ It is real nice to see General Chuntering back after all these years. I remember John Russell Fearn at the Supermancon. I thought he had a good sense of humour considering all the joshing he got. Cost of ERG, I'm not surprised to see you wince at the postal costs. @ Many thanks for the £1.00 enclose thel, very kind and useful. @

ALAN BURNS, 19 THE CRESCENT, KING'S RD. STN., WALLSEND, N.TYNESIDE

Ken Slater, I hope Joyce's knee op came out satisfactorily, a lot of old ladies round here have had them and while they are still hobbling, it is with greater ease. Russell Fearn, ah yes, he was a trail blazer in the dear dead days beyond recall. Tales Of Wonder, dear dead days, sob sob. Analog also, sob sob. I'm suprised the ghost of John W. doesn't haunt the present editor. Though on face pictures, I recall drawings of the Mule's head. @ Rogers tended to do lots of faces, but nowadays, all the 'artists' seem to do 'em. @



ROGER SHEPPARD, 117 KENT HOUSE RD., BECKENHAM, KENT, BR3 1JJ

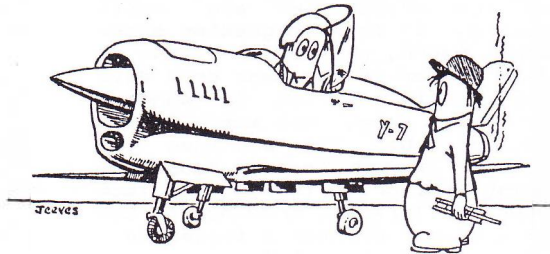
Your Fearn piece was good: maybe it could have been longer? Harbottle did his book, (Multi Man?) some years ago, and I don't think that even he tracked everything Fearn had done. ☞ Sadly, it's out of print. ☞ Your Interesting Items were interesting. Unfortunately, Ned Brooks doesn't think I'm all that interesting: I can't get hold of 'It Goes On The Shelf' and I'd love to see this. US Fanzines are difficult, my latest ploy is to go to the bank and simply buy dollar bills and send them on. If I get \$50 they only charge around \$3.50 conversion. ☞ That's definitely the best way to send dollars abroad and avoid that ridiculous £17.00 fee, only snag is risk involved. ☞

PAR NILSSON, SPECHTSWEIG 18-413, 44801 BOCHUM, GERMANY

Have to agree with your editorial conclusion on the definition of SF, but disagree with your very interesting 'Odd Jobs' article. There was a British attempt to build a jet-powered seaplane fighter, the Saro something-or-other which looked more or less like a conventional flying boat. The design was not successful, but I believe it was of earlier origin than the Sea Dart. ☞ You're right, the Saunders-Roe SR.A/1 was the first jet-powered flying boat and flew in 1947, some seven years before the Sea Dart. It was abandoned due to lack of manoeuvrability and low speed - its 512 mph was only no better than convention fighters - but I have no details of it being armed as a fighter. ☞

ALAN SULLIVAN, 30 ASH RD., STRATFORD, LONDON E15 1HL

I've come across references to Fearn's name - and mention of the Vargo Statten Magazine once or twice, but none of his stories. He sounds like the sort of writer whose approach was that the story was the thing. Too many authors - especially these days, get bogged down in technical details and angst-ridden examinations of the Human Condition. There's a lot to be said for simple stories - especially if the writer has the knack of creating interesting characters. Shame he got known for the 'House' pseudonyms rather than his own; something which no doubt helped push him into undeserved obscurity. 'What's Wrong With Analog? The problem may be that the writers in question are trying to appeal to what they think is the readership. It's hard to tell what the readers want without trying, and without feedback. In these times of Political Correctness and Causes For Concern it is all too easy for people to get carried away with their Vital Message and forget how important it is to Sneak The Message Into The Story Without Too Much Lecturing. People don't usually buy stories for the message and usually skip over lengthy bletherings looking for the good bits. ☞ I always think of the tedious Mack Reynold's 'Cold War' stories where each character in turn got to explain the State Of The World' - from their viewpoint. Dead tedious. ☞



"The ash-tray rattles a bit if you use the de-icers above Mach 3"



S.JEFFERY & V.L.FRANCE, 44 WHITE WAY, KIDLINGTON, OXON OX5 2XA

I'm pondering your question on the space elevator, but I can't recall enough of my A level maths. There's probably a flaw here in that the total energy of a system remains unchanged and that kinetic energy is exchanged with potential energy as the car's position changes. By the same argument, if we jumped off the Earth, we should land a few yards behind our take off position.  $\Rightarrow$  You have to PUT IN energy to raise the car to orbital velocity and thus change its kinetic energy to potential (and increase it). But at ground level, the car is moving with the Earth at around 1000mph. Energy must be entered somehow, to raise this to orbital velocity. Rising, it comes from cable pull (i.e. Earth's rotational energy,) descending, it is slowed by cable drag thus putting energy into the Earth's rotation. In the case of jumping off Earth, you don't add or subtract energy from the earth and don't rise high enough for the difference in orbital velocity to be noticed.  $\Leftarrow$  There was mention towards the end of last year of a 'new' drug that was considered safe 'under certain circumstances' - its name, 'Thalidomide'! There is now alarm about the high incidence of teeth problems in children from over exposure to Fluoride from both treated water and toothpaste.  $\Rightarrow$  It figures.  $\Leftarrow$

ITEMS continued

TRAP DOOR.13 comes from Bob Lichtman, PO Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442,USA and boasts 36 folded foolscap pages, good layout, excellent illos and topnotch printing. Contents include a ConFrancisco report, Calvin Demmon writes on brain surgery, Carol Carr rambles on personal notes, Geri Sullivandwells on family matters, Shelby Vick likewise. Jay Kinney tours Istanbul and the final half of the issue boasts a meaty LDCcol. Get it for the usual.

RIVERCON XIX takes place in Louisville, Kentucky over the weekend of July 29-31. 1994. Membership is \$20 until Jly.15, then £30.00 after that or at the door. Forry Ackerman is GOH and Verna Trestrail (Doc Smith's daughter is Fan GOH. Write to RiverCon, PO Box 58009, Louisville, KY 40268-0009, USA for further details.

LAN'S LANTERN Runs to no less than 150 well produced pages and is crammed with excellent art (and a clunker or two), Patrouch extrapolates on 'Rogue Moon', there's humour, loads of good reviews of books, films, tapes and fanzines. Articles on British SF films of the sixties, Harry Harryhausen's films, news, conreps, and many other goodies. It's a steal at \$3.00 from George 'Lan' Laskowski, 1306 Cherokee, Royal Oak, MI 48067-3386, USA

FIRST ISSUES was to have been MARVEL SCIENCE STORIES, but it got crowded out this time, it will be back in the next issue. GENTLE HINT, I collect space stamps, so if you have any used or unused and unwanted ones, remember me.

CAMERA-shy -- well sadly, my trusty Fujica STX-1 with which I take the photos for ART IN SF and FIRST ISSUE, has gone for a Burton. It cost me around £70 some 14 years ago, now the clever man says it will cost £80 to repair and he wouldn't recommend it. So now I'll have to borrow Val's (identical model) until I can find something to replace it. I want a manual gadget, not one of these all-singing, all-dancing computerised models. I fancy I'm looking t around £200 -- ouch!

All the best, Terry

Browsing through my old TRIODE files, I came across some musings which seemed sufficiently SF-ish to warrant reprinting them here with an addition or two and a little editing

Fictional adventurers have used a variety of ways to reach the Moon. One traveller was carted there in a duck-powered chariot, another was wafted up by flasks of evaporating dew, Barn MUnChausen is reputed to have leaped astride a passing cannon-ball - I shudder to thin of the results of a spot of bad timing. Jules Verne also used a cannon to get his characters into space by firing them out of one -

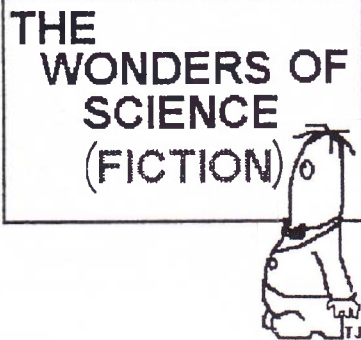
a process guaranteed to wreak havoc with both their digestion and their braces (suspenders to our American cousins). Clinical tests indicate that the average pair of braces gives way at around 2.7183G.

To get around this dilemma, H.G.Wells was craftier. His hero, Cavor, stirred things up in a pot and produced 'Cavorite'. This was a nifty metal which nullified gravity (N Mabel, I don't know how he kept it in the pot) and when made into spacecraft, carried men to the Moon. Apart from the machinations of the Selenites, the worst effect of this system was to give the astronauts a nasty bout of sea-sickness in space - a sort of mal-de-void, as it were. Devoid of their lunches probably. It wasn't explained how one leaned over the side of the spaceship.

Nothing really new came along for quite a time until Doc Smith invented the Bergenholm. This not only nullified inertia, but allowed for instant acceleration to lightspeed. In addition, it did away with broken braces. In the fifties, SF fandom considered building a Tower Of Beer Cans to the Moon. A valiant effort was made to consume enough beer to provide the basic materials, but the actual building got more and more haphazrd until it was finally abandoned. Unhappily, none of these methods was available to the Apollo astronauts who had to depend on those nasty, smelly rocket things. Whilst doing the job, but srr woefully efficient (and damaging to braces).

What the real world needed was needed was something new, even a Cavorite-plated Bergenholm fired from a pair of stretched braces would have been acceptable. Instead, we got the DEAN DRIVE. I first met this in the hallowed pages of Astounding, but it later turned up in the prestigious 'Missiles & Rockets' and other journals.

In the ASF version, you got the whole works, several pages of incomprehensible description accompanied by some nicely fuzzed photographs - presumably taken by the chap who photographs all the UFOs. Anyway, I gathered that one simply took an electric drill, a set of off-centre weight and the scales from the bathroom. You pirated Junior's Meccano (or Erector set) and bolted them all together. You then switched on the drill and BINGO! you had a space

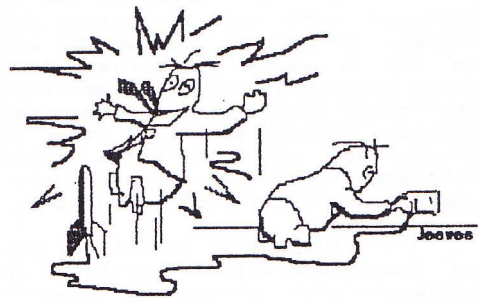




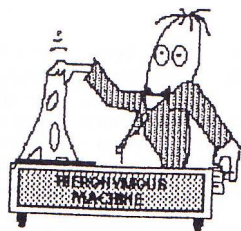
drive which might lift you to the stars. Well, let's be fair, you didn't actually have a space-drive. What you had was a gadget trying like merry Hell to batter its way through the bathroom floor. Maybe it was just taking off in the wrong direction, but obviously further work was needed. Campbell pointed this out with scholarly logic, but Heaven knows what bathroom scales could ever find to push against in the vacuum of space. Even so, when using my power drill in the bathroom, I keep well away from the scales lest I accidentally shoot myself into orbit.

This wasn't Campbell's only essay into the realms of solving (editorially) the problems of space flight. In one issue of ASF, he described a model airship which had a magnificent new form of (totally secret) propulsion. It could give men the stars - once the bugs were removed. One got the impression that a large scale use of Penicillin or DDT could solve all the problems of spaceflight.

Even more shocks were in store. Harry Stine, a keen model rocketeer described a series of experiments designed to give a rocket an added boost at take-off. The method was delightfully simple. Give the thing a hefty static charge. This would give it a hefty repulsion to help push it off the Earth. Stine said his tests indicated that charged rockets got higher than uncharged ones.



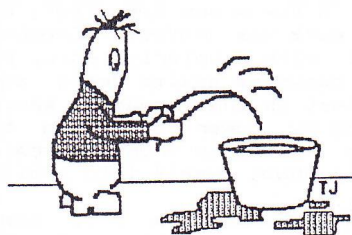
Maybe I'm daft, but surely if the charge was *different* from that of the Earth, the rocket would be attracted *down* and if it were the same, then why isn't everything else shoved up off the surface? Just a nit-picker, that's me. Nevertheless, as Stine pointed out, once the bugs were ....



Campbell explored other strange byways such as his 'discovery' of the Hieronymous machine. All you had to do was build a Hi-Fi amplifier, hook its input to a cylindrical coil and its output to a flat coil under a sheet of Perspex. You then put a sample in the first coil and twiddled a tuning dial whilst tuning a variable condenser. A process not unlike rubbing your stomach whilst patting your head. Results were

about the same -- usually nothing, although some people claimed to feel the stroked surface go 'tacky'. Eric Jones made a machine and brought it to the 1957 Worldcon. When I tried it, John W. Campbell appeared - well, he happened to be passing at the time and we had a rather one-sided (on my part) conversation. You might say we got stuck on the same Hieronymous machine. Later on, I constructed the

symbolic model as detailed in Analog. I got results that were 100% reproducible. Over and over again, nothing happened with monotonous regularity.



Then there was the case of dowsing. Once again, John W. took up the cudgels for an off-trail subject. Having a shortage of forked hazel twigs in downtown New York, John favoured the use of coat-hanger wire. Take two L shaped pieces, slot the short ends into 6" lengths of tube so they can swing freely, take one in each hand and set off in search of buried water pipes, hidden springs, or if you're really good, a gold-mine or two.

John also ventured into pendulum divination whereby you held a pendulum over a map and the thing would swing or oscillate over the part of the map where water, gold, A-bombs, or your lost socks could be found. Wonderful gadget, there should be one in every home.

Then of course, we had ESP. J.B.Rhine of Duke University produced some very convincing data (which I gather was later proved false). SF writers took up the idea, John Campbell loved it, and so we got a spate of stories where the heroes read minds, lit fires, moved objects (including themselves), forecast the future or did all the other things normally reserved for spell-casting wizards in that rubbishy fantasy stuff. I tried the telekinetic, mind over matter trick, but all I got was a headache; when it came to reading the 25 ESP cards, my score was a reliable average. No doubt my ESP wasn't going to reveal itself that easily.

This world is full of wonders just waiting to be discovered by people who know the truth of their existence. Many such faithful believers risk pneumonia, ammonia or rampant Presbyterianism by paddling up and down the clammy mists of Loch Ness in search of a Scottish publicity man's brainwave. London Zoo used to produce a new exotic animal, (preferably a cuddly one), each year at the start of the tourist season and invited the credulous public to come and see the snuggeworthy Panda, Chimp, or man-eating-banana. I'll bet if they offered an empty cage with, 'An expertly camouflaged animal from the wilds of Upper Slobbovokia'; umpteen people would come and many would 'see' it.

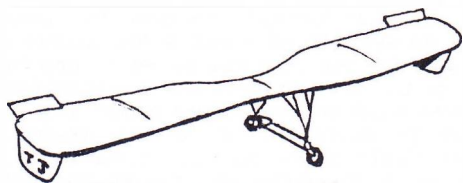
Even so, strange powers do exist in the universe. Mathematicians tell us that if you toss a penny a hundred times, you can expect around fifty heads and fifty tails. If that is true why is it a slice of buttered toast always seems to land gooey side down? Make a hundred tosses and I bet you wouldn't get a fifty-fifty result there. A logical experiment would be to toss a hundred pennies with butter and marmalade on one side. Such a test could be extended to provide material for a PhD thesis. What is the ratio of car-washing to rainfall? This seems a far more certain way of bringing down the wet-stuff than doing a Hopi rain-dance. Why do people invariably cough more in concerts or religious services than anywhere else? How about the winning line on the pools coupon which only comes up the week you forgot to mail it in? The world is full of such wonderful and mysterious things waiting to be fully researched.

## GENERAL CHUNTERING

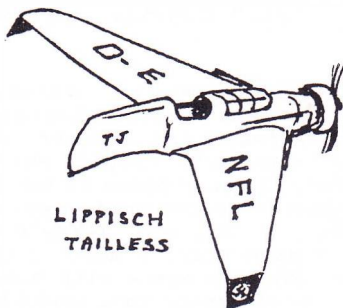
Ken F Slater

Those of you on whom my catalogue is inflicted will know that of recent date I've been somewhat harrassed. So when Terry's request for this column arrived I had no notes made. I do usually have notes for things I intend to include, despite which I seem to get over-involved in one or two items at the expense of the rest, so the form of this series of GC has no semblance to its predecessors. Bear with me, there was something in ERG 124 ... Ah, yes. Terry's threat to cancel his order for ANALOG. I can't have that; I mean, s'me that sells it to him... Trouble is, I'm inclined to agree with him. Not about the artwork; for me most of this is waste space that would be better used for more text, but on that I'm a very tiny minority. But I know what Terry means, and I took a quick scan thru some recent magazines and found that the amount of material which I would note as "sf" if I found it outside the specialist magazines was rather small. I also noticed that often the technological problem (if any!) was subservient to the emotional or personal relationship problem or problems in the story. There once was much complaint that characters in s-f and fantasy were all card cut-outs, not realistic: and authors took action to rectify this; quite successfully. Perhaps too much so? Could it be that in clearing all those old stock B&W Hero/Villain types from the hold of the spaceship we also chucked out the engine? Possible for something is missing. Possibly an old enthusiasm. It is the interests of many readers and writers that have changed. Not many people are interested in going to the stars; they are very much interested in gene manipulation, possible uses of virtual reality, biological enhancement, AI, and the environment. A thought for what it is worth (not much). No-one, faced with the reality of the existing rocket bases, would seriously consider someone building a space vessel in the backyard or basement; but who knows what some bio-chemist or electronic wizard might not conjure up in his or her private bedside laboratory. And we appear to have given up all hope of moving into or through other dimensions, because (I gather) modern maths/physics don't allow for the existence of such in the way s-f plots used to use them. The gnurrs couldn't come from the vood-vork out, and the hurkle is no longer a happy beast. And that unicorn over there was bio-engineered and they cancelled out the gene that made it fussy about the sexual status of its riders. But there are still some good stories - if you change the view point a bit. I find I have to keep updating mine although on occasion I get stubborn. Way back when I was first learning to write, and making whole rows of 'pothooks', my grandfather taught me how to cut a quill. I couldn't do it today, I fear, although perhaps with a little trial and error I could remaster the skill. I don't feel the need, so I won't try. But I've recently been asked am I (under my professional hat) going to stock and handle CD-ROM. The simple answer is "no". For one thing I have only a vague idea what "CD-ROM" is, and if it is what I think, I don't handle vid-tapes so I don't feel the need to take on the next step. Hell, I'm way past my biblical shelf-life, and have found that I can get by without having racks of video-tapes because I'd rather read a book than watch a screen. But at the same time I appreciate other folk have other interests, so I sat down with a copy of a book trade journal (1993 edition) which covers sideline products for bookshops (Video and CD ROM section), and telephoned a dozen outfits which supply bookshops. They couldn't suggest one retail outlet which did mail order. Do you know of one? I have a Japanese fan who'd like to contact one. O.F. rules OK.

# TAIL AWAY

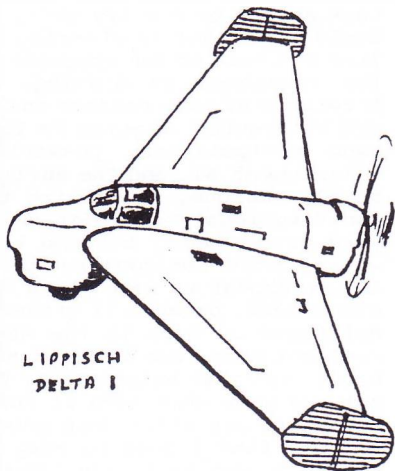


LIPPISCH GLIDER 1921

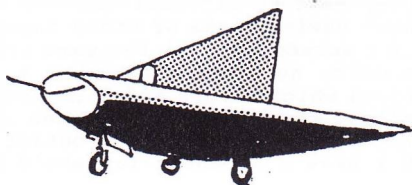
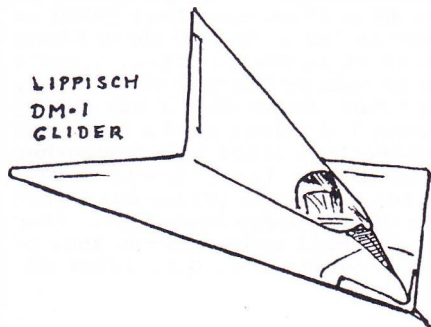


No series on unusual aircraft can fail to mention the designs of Alexander Lippisch, the German designer who built his first tailless glider in 1921. It had wing tip fins and rudders which also supported the wings when the machine was on the ground. It also had wing-tip elevons and central landing wheels.

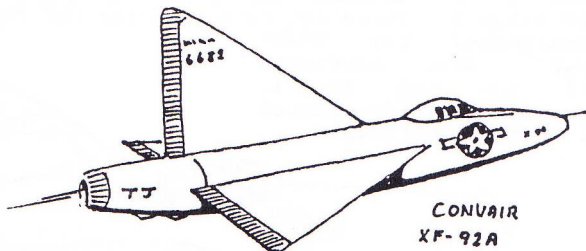
This was followed by several gliders and light aircraft and the striking D-1 which was built in 1930. This was another tailless aircraft with a blocky fuselage, pusher propeller and a severely triangular wing plan with end fins and rudders. It didn't go into production but formed the basis of other delta wing aeroplanes such as this radial-engine, tractor propeller machine built just before the war.



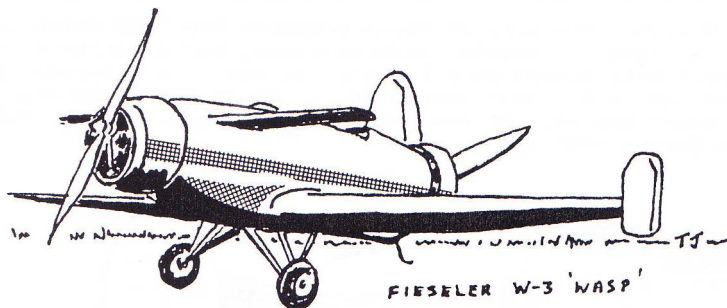
Lippisch's DM-1 was the first true delta wing, that is with an acute angle rather than an obtuse angle - i.e. a leading edge sweep back of more than 45°. Developed late in World War II, it was a glider mock-up for a fighter to be powered by ramjets. It was tested, either by air-tow to 20,000ft, or pick-a-back air release and was limited to 347mph. It had a retractable tricycle landing gear and was mainly of wood and plywood construction.



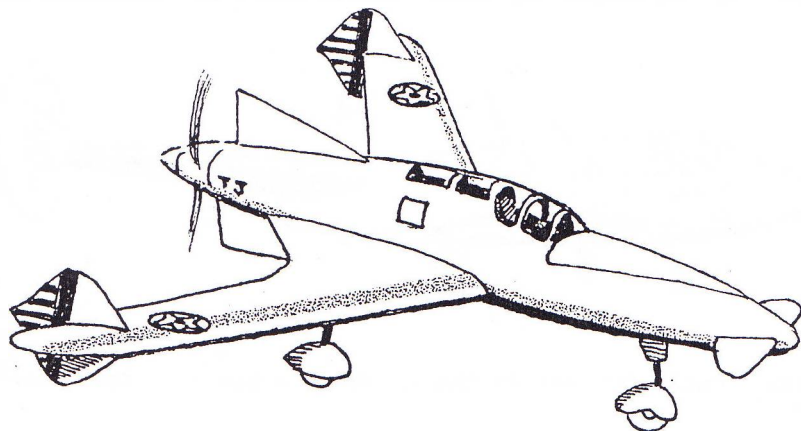
The DM-1 was 'liberated' by the US Forces and taken to the USA for testing in 1945. The data obtained led to the construction of the Convair Vultee XF-92A which proved so successful that it went into production as the F-102A Delta Dagger, of which over a thousand were built.



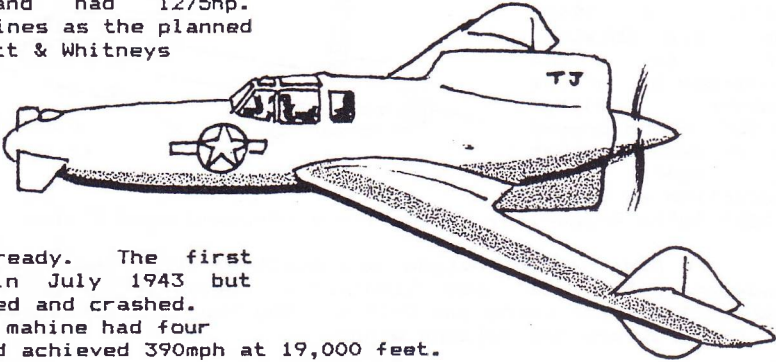
Many of his designs were built by other companies. The Fieseler W-3 'Wasp' was Lippisch's Delta IV design. It was a push-pull machine using two British 75hp Pobjoy engines and had a canard foreplane and folding wings.



Other designers also produced some striking tailless and canard designs. The Curtiss Wright CW-24B was a particularly nice design, not unlike the Kyushu 'Shiden' mentioned earlier in this series. A lightweight wood and fabric aircraft was built in 1941 to test the design.



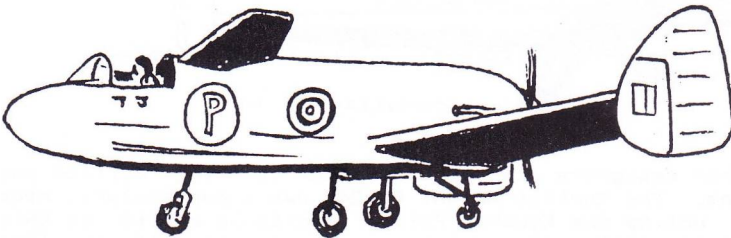
It had a 75hp Menasco engine, a fixed tricycle undercarriage and made 169 flights. These led to a contract for three machine which were designated the XP-55 'Ascender' (also mentioned earlier) and had 1275hp. Allison engines as the planned 2200hp. Pratt & Whitneys



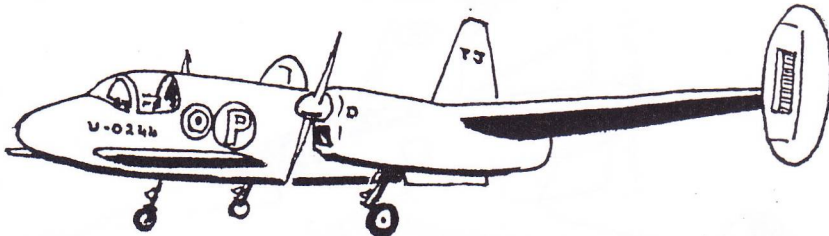
were not ready. The first model flew in July 1943 but spun, stalled and crashed.

The third machine had four .50 guns and achieved 390mph at 19,000 feet.

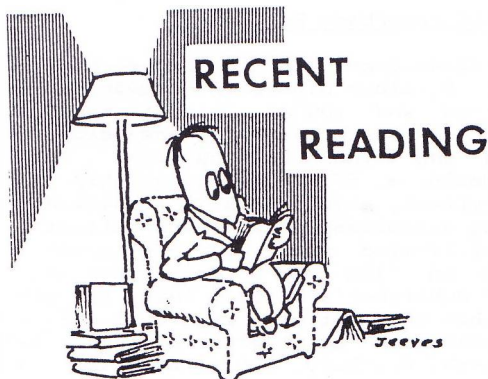
In England, the firm of Miles produced the M-35 which in addition to a fixed tricycle undercarriage, had a fourth rear wheel to prevent tail damage on rotation. It was a single-seater with ailerons on a 20' span main wing, a canard foreplane and a 130hp. Gypsy Major engine. It was intended as a test vehicle for deck landings during 1940/41.



Miles also developed a more advanced, twin-engine model, the M-39 with two 140p Gypsy Major engines and a maximum speed of 164mph.







HORRIPILATIONS: The Art Of J.K.Potter Nigel Suckling Paper Tiger £12.95

Physically large with 128 pages of striking illustrations, 105 in colour.

Potter distorts reality by photo montages enhanced with skilful airbrush work. The results are NOT 'bitty' collages, but complete,

convincing and often startling works of art. Whether of a mermaid lounging on the shore, or of a house-topped skull floating over a lightning-ravaged landscape, all have a unique impact. Many are original, some illustrate books. There's a Stephen King Introduction, comprehensive captions and the accompanying text adds further enchantment to the visuals. Highly recommended for all lovers of the unusual in art and photography.

GUILTY PLEASURES Laurell K.Hamilton N.E.L. £4.99

Vampires have legal status (along with ghouls, zombies etc.), but someone is killing vampires! Anita Blake of Animators Inc., a raiser of the dead, is asked to investigate. When she refuses she is tormented by werewolf rats and menaced by the 1000 year old vampire mistress, Nikolaos. Worse, a vampire she thought she had killed, seeks revenge. A completely new slant on vampires which builds to a striking climax of horror and menace.

THE LONGING RING Christopher Kubasik ROC £3.99

17 year old J'role stays dumb because of a creature in his head. He joins with Garthlick, an ork who has stolen a magic ring from wizard Mordom. Seeking riches promised by the ring and pursued by Mordom, the pair embark on an adventurous trek before the treasure is found and the awful secret of J'role's mind creature revealed. A highly readable fantasy accompanied by black and white illustrations.

TEHANU: THE LAST BOOK OF EARTHSEA Ursula Le Guin ROC £4.99

Newly widowed Goya (Tenar) raises Therru, a fire-maimed gypsy child. Then the dragon Kalessin delivers the ailing archmage Ged (Sparrowhawk) to her. The King's men come seeking Ged, and the man who injured Therru also turns up. Le Guin weaves a slow, leisurely yarn made more complicated by using two names for main characters. A lovely fairy-tale style rich in folk-lore and magic.

BATTLE: ASSUMPTION OF RISK Michael A.Stackpole ROC £3.99

Latest in the Battletech series, this is the book version of a computer game. Kai Allard-Liao, games champion finds himself drawn into a web of intrigue with unexpected results. The story makes so many starts and dwells so long on background details that I lost track of just what was happening. It also includes the pages of drawings of the 'transformer-style' Battle Machines.

THE MUSHROOM JUNGLE: A History Of Paperback Publishing

Steve Holland Zeon \$14.95

216 large pages (234x166mm) and with innumerable cover reproductions,, many in colour. A rather high-brow Foreword by Brian Stableford, a brief Introduction and you're into a fascinating account of how paperbacks originated, overcame prejudice, paper shortages, wartime restrictions and other difficulties. The ten chapters cover publishers, Westerns, SF, Crime, censorship trials, pulps and other areas. The excellent, amusing and informative text is livened up by interesting anecdotes and a superb collection of cover reproductions (with scantily-clad women in profusion). In addition, you get appendices on 'The Horror Comics Campaign', a Bibliography and a selection of Publisher's Logos. This is one of those books you read for fun, then wear it with continual reference.

Get it from your local bookseller or direct from Zeon - Zardoz Books, 20 Whitecroft, Ditton Marsh, Westbury, Wilts BA13 4DJ (They also sell SF in hardcover and paperback).

STAR WARS: THE TRUCE AT BAKURA Kathy Tyers Bantam £9.99

An intercepted message drone warns of an attack on far-off Empire-world Bakura, by aliens who make humans into android machines.

Luke Skywalker heads a task force to make a truce and aid the Empire. His hope is that Bakura will join the Alliance, but Governor Nereus is tempted to betray him to the aliens. To complicate matters, Luke is contacted by a human slave of the aliens, and finds romance on Bakura. A complicated but well developed plot and a steal at £9.99. Nothing to do with the story, but I have a few general Star Wars queries - how did Leia, daughter of Darth Vader become a Princess, and why isn't brother Luke a prince? Moreover, since nobody understands R2-D2, why don't they fit him a voice box?

WORLDS ENOUGH AND TIME Joe Haldeman N.E.L. £4.99

Marianne O'Hara, member of a group marriage is aboard generation starship Newhome leaving a devastated Earth when a coded message is received trashing most of the computer files. The story is told by her AI clone as she discovers ship's democracy is a sham, crops fail disastrously and other problems must be faced - with a final meeting with aliens and the discovery of the truth about first contact. Slow moving and low key being more concerned with personal relations than the starship's saga.

WILD BLOOD Nancy A.Collins N.E.L. £4.99

Skinner Cade discovers he was an adopted child, so sets out to find his father and the mystery surrounding his birth. The search leads him into jail where a traumatic rape turns him into a werewolf. Breaking out with another confirmed criminal, he meets up with others of his kind, then attends their rut-conclave with fiendish results. A strong mixture of sex, rape, violence and gutter language. I wonder what Ms. Collins is like to know?

ECHOES OF FLAME Jonathan Wylie Corgi £4.99

Second in the Island and Empire trilogy. The Islanders of Zalys have revolted against the Xantic Empire, but when Chancellor Verkho sends a fleet to quell them it is overwhelmed by giant manta rays. Then the creatures attack Zalys, so Dsordas and Fen go to seek aid in Xantium. Verkho dominates Emperor Southar, whose wife Ifrys loves another. The jumps in scenes and characters fragment the narrative thread making it a difficult yarn to follow.

HIDDEN CHARGES Ridley Pearson SMP (PAN) £4.99

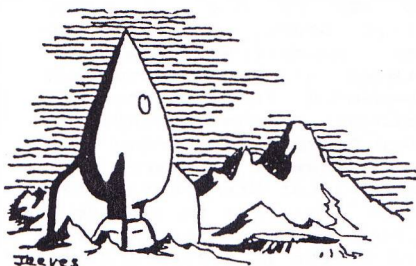
Work on the giant new shopping mall nears completion, but deep within its service tunnels, a brain-damaged veteran is steadily planting explosives. Security Chief, Jacobs already has worries - gang theft, a truck accident, a vigilante rabble-rouser, a sub-standard concrete scam and a nubile young reporter. A lively mix of characters keeps everything going until the cliff-hanging climax. It'll make a great film.

THE FROGS OF WAR Andrew Harman Legend £3.99

On some strange alternate world, four magicians conjure up the ultimate weapon - two giant frogs! Then a (natural) chain reaction produces eggs and hordes of the creatures - with control depending on the Thaumaturgon at Losa Llamas. Ex-Chancellor escapes his guards, plunders passing caravans and takes control of the frogs of war. An outrageous assortment of puns in a rich blend of Pratchett, Anthony and Adams. Read at peril to your funny-bone.

ALIENS: EARTH HIVE Steve Perry Millennium £4.99

Corporal Wilks still has nightmares after his last alien encounter. Now he is ordered to join a mission to bring back a live one as a weapon. He breaks fellow sufferer Billie out of asylum and smuggles her aboard the mission vessel. Their ship is shadowed by an illegal, android-manned craft commanded by a psychopath; the aim being to wipe out the government mission and grab their own alien -- but one is already incubating on Earth. A movie spin-off, well-written, never a dull moment, and a great read.

BAD BRAINS Kathe Kojka Millennium £4.99

Austen is on the skids, his wife gone and his painting inspiration likewise. Then he falls, damages his skull and begins to have visions. Despite doctors and medication the visions get worse - and worse. Written in a frenetic, down-beat, stream-of-consciousness style which I just couldn't finish.

SKIN Kathe Kojka Millennium £4.99

Compulsive sculptor Tess meets equally compulsive dancer Bibi and joins her communal group. They begin to push the limits of their respective skill - with terrible results. Written in the same kitchen-sink, let-it-all-hang-out style as 'Bad Brains'. You'll love it or hate it. Definitely not my cup of tea.

THE FOREVER KING Molly Cochran & Warren Murphy Millennium £4.99

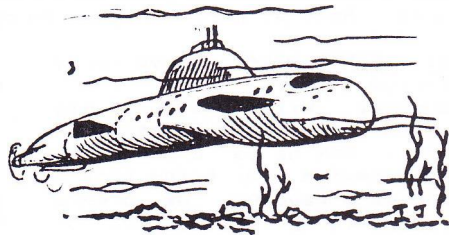
Saladin, an insane killer escapes an asylum and seeks to regain the lost alien artifact which makes him immortal. It is held by Arthur, a young New Yorker and saves him and his guardian, Aunt Emily from assassination attempt. A strange series of coincidences wrought by the mysterious 'Talesin' brings Arthur & Emily to England along with ex-FBI man Hal Wocznjak. Confronted by Saladin they discover the truth about Talesin, Arthur and the strange object. An un-putdownable blend of modern fantasy and old legends.

FISSION IMPOSSIBLE Phil Janes Millennium £13.99

Second in the series wherein two Supreme Energy Beings are playing a colossal game with the Universe as their board. The defending Champion's team comprises Carlton, Curtis, Gloria, Wilverton, the android Arnold and new obstreperous girl Fission. They are set ten tasks which include getting the Golden Fleas, trapping a changeling, bearding the Minotaur and other simple jobs. The totally inept group achieves its aims by much fortuitous bumbling in beautifully whacky ways which are a delight to follow. Characters you care about in a great fantasy which SUCCESSFULLY pushes humour to its limits; far better than Pratchett. Anthony and company. I loved it.

seaQuest: The Novel Diane Duane & Peter Morwood Millennium £9.99

In the 21st. Century, various combines have established undersea bases and an uneasy peace which is nearly pushed into war by the psychotic Marilyn Stark, captain of the super submarine seaQuest. Relieved of her command and recommended for psychiatric treatment, she vanishes. Nathan Bridger is coerced back from retirement to take over seaQuest, but Stark returns in another submarine to seek to destroy seaQuest having left a sabotage virus in its computers. Based on the TV series and including tokens such as a black First Mate from an underprivileged background, a woman Commander, a boy computer genius and the dolphin Darwin. A highly improbable but exciting plot which keeps you hooked to the end.

THE HACKER CRACKDOWN Bruce Sterling Penguin £6.99

The widespread use of phone-linked computers led to many people using them for fraud, privacy invasion and general mischief, all of which cost business (and individuals) lots of money. Thus, when an obscure software fault caused a nation-wide phone system collapse, it was blamed on 'hackers' and a great crackdown began; mass raids, confiscation, fines and jail sentences followed. This is the story behind that purge and how it was both justified and Draconianly unfair. A fascinating language book for computer lovers and users, but written in everyday language without an equation in sight.

COMPLEXITY M.Mitchell Waldrop Penguin £6.99

How did life arise? Why did Russia collapse? How does a butterfly affect a hurricane? Problems involving complex and seemingly random factors seem to develop their own rules. Complexity, adaptation and chaos form the basis of this book which traces research on physics, economics and biology to reveal internal order rising in complex systems. NOT a mathematically heavy text, but a plain language account of the work and ideas of those involved.

Not easy reading, but stimulating, thought provoking and totally absorbing. If you're interested in the principles underlying life, physics, and much more, then this is for you.

BATTLETECH: FAR COUNTRY Peter L.Rice ROC £3.99

A vessel carrying Takuda's elite troops and Vort's vicious mercenaries hits a space anomaly and maroons them on a distant world - where others were similarly stranded 500 years ago. Tensions mount, giant intelligent birds appear and then contact with the earlier settlers precipitates greed and treachery as Vort seeks domination and Takuda wishes to establish an altruistic Samurai society. A more cerebral Battletech novel than usual with the various threads well interwoven and developed. A good read.

THE WRECKS OF TIME M.Moorcock ROC £4.99

Originally titled 'Rituals Of Infinity'; alternate Earths are being destroyed by the D-Squad anarchists. Professor Falstaff and his group seek to protect and sustain those remaining. He picks up hitch-hiker Nancy whilst driving on Earth 3, (if it is 'unable to support life', how come it has cities, motels, filling stations etc ?

Then he lands headlong in a D-Squad attack, encounters hostile 'salvagers' and the enigmatic Steifflomeiss. Full of improbable situations, coincidences and cardboard characters.

GREYBEARD Brian Aldiss ROC £4.99

Sparcot is a tiny community in a post disaster England ravaged by cholera and near-zero childbirth. When stoats threaten he hamlet, Greybeard, a Heinlein-type father-figure leads his wife and a few others off down river on an aimless course in which they begin to seek and save children. This re-issue of a 1964 classic still reads well, concentrates on human values and is reminiscent of 'Earth Abides', 'Davy' and other post-disaster yarns.

DAMIA'S CHILDREN Anne McCaffrey Corgi £4.99

Damia and Alfra live on Iota Aurigae, raising and 'pairing' their children (who have esp powers and eidetic memories) with those of the Mrdini. Now three Hive spacecraft have been observed and son Thian helps locate a derelict but is attacked by a telepath-hater. A Hive Queen is captured and helped by daughter Zara. A slow opening and a feast of names slow the start of a rather episodic story. Just as things get interesting, it ends like part of a serial with threads unresolved - 'For The Time Being'.

STAR WARS: The Last Command Timothy Zahn Bantam £4.99

Insane Jedi C'Boath is aiding Grand Admiral Thrawn to use ships crewed by clones for a final assault on the forces of the Rebellion. Skywalker and Solo aided by Mara who has sworn to kill Luke, set out to find the source of clone production and a hit squad comes after Leia and her new-born twins. The plot has more holes than a tea-strainer but has all the ingredients of a fast-moving action adventure. Space battles galore, smugglers and criminals, goodies and baddies. A fun read with Thrawn as the most interesting character as he pursues his devious plans.

THE HAND OF CHAOS Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman Bantam £4.99

Book 5 of The Death Gate Cycle. Having escaped the Labyrinth and visited the four worlds of the Nexus, Haplo returns to warn his master, Lord Xar of the growing menace of the dragon snakes. but one has already sowed suspicion of him in Xar's mind. The treacherous child Bane has added to this by further lies so that Xar says Bane must kill Haplo. Haplo is ordered to take the child to Arianus and start the enigmatic kicksey-winsey machine, thus causing chaos which Xar can halt and so gain kudos.

THE GOLDEN Lucius Shepherd Millennium £5.99

For 300 years, vampire Families have manipulated blood lines to produce 'The Golden'. Members finally gather in Castle Barnat to partake of the girl's blood - but someone slays her first. Beheim, a chief of detectives and a newly admitted vampire, must find the killer - a task complicated by Family intrigues. It involves him in a bloody duel, magic, strange dimensions and treachery before final confrontation with the murderer. A totally different vampire tale which will hold you enthralled.

WARPATH Tony Daniel Millennium £4.99

The planet Candle is 500 light years from Earth by matter transmission, three months by starship, and 24 days paddling in a canoe - a method used by Indians who control the AI boosting 'loosa clay'. When Will James meets his Indian friend 'Wanderer', they are set upon and robbed of a load of 'rhythm' (a drug style program), and a copy of Wanderer's AI 'Raej'. All part of a ploy by a religious sect, pawn of the evil AI 'Hwaet'. Will and his friend fight back aided by Raej and wind spirit Susan. A fascinating blend of fantasy and SF with good characters in a multi level plot.

ALIENS: NIGHTMARE ASYLUM Steve Perry Millennium £4.99

Second in the series based on the 20th. Century Fox film. Following on from 'Earth Hive', Earth is over-run by aliens; humans have fled into space and one enclave, headed by the psychotic General Spears is seeking to breed aliens troops. Marine Wilks, Billie and her android lover escaped Earth aboard a robot ship, but then find aliens aboard. Even worse, they encounter Spears. More action-packed than its predecessor, the only snag is you know the goodies can't wipe out all aliens without ending the series.

THE IRON DRAGON'S DAUGHTER Michael Swanwick Millennium £8.99

Jane is a child slave-labourer in a dragon-making factory, alongside trolls, dwarfs and other weird creatures. Escaping with damaged dragon, 7332, she takes up shop-lifting, attends school and begins her unusual career. Her life is an escalating series of adventures, sex, drugs and magic, all 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. A hefty, trade-size read.

CHILD OF THUNDER Mickey Zucker Reichert Millennium £8.99

Colbey, the last Renshai Warrior must tackle the Seven Tasks of Wizardry to qualify him as the Western Wizard. Shadimar, the Eastern Wizard is sure he will fail. Elsewhere, Khitrajha, women's freedom activist slays the killers of her son and flees a trumped up charge. The voice of Chaos tells her it can return her son if she does as it says. Colbey faces his tasks and links with Khitrajha for a fast-moving saga of adventure and magic. Large size, 500 pages and you get an appendix of names, places and pronunciations.

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH Lucius Shepard Millennium £8.99

A massive anthology holding 14 tales of speculative fantasy culled from the promags. Themes include victimisation in Viet Nam, a trans-dimensional train ride, a sex-crazed priest, a nymphomaniac witch, spiders of illusion, time travel, recalling a veteran's ghost and others. The tales are well written, with good ideas, but are introspective and wordy without a 'twist' ending in the lot. A

THE MAILMAN Bentley Little Headline £16.99

When postman Bob Ronda suicides, his replacement, John Smith arrives. Mail begins to go astray, bills are undelivered and forged letters make everyone's life miserable. Teacher Doug Albin investigates, events worsen, old friends turn against each other, there are more suicides, some gruesome killings and though everyone suspects the mailman, there is no proof despite the evil becoming even more open. Tension never flags as events and menace are skilfully escalated in a top notch horror yarn. Quibble. Why so much explicit sex? Is it writer's wish fulfillment?

THE FIREBRAND Marion Zimmer Bradley Penguin £5.99

Taking the historic fall of Troy as her starting point, Ms Bradley has developed her own, different and fictional version. Cassandra, Princess of Troy, tells her story of the clashes between different groups and individuals and those worshipping the Earth Mother or Gods of The Pantheon. This sort of tale isn't my cup of tea, but if you enjoy MZB or ancient fantasy, you might give this a whirl.

SHADOW HUNTER Will Baker ROC £4.99

After the Last Wars, the Federation rules, animals have become more intelligent and co-operative, and Homo Lapsis, hybrid of humans and apes, known as the Ginks, inhabit the Wastelands. When Ronald's father takes him hunting (in a semi-tank), ants and bears collaborate to attack. Ronald is captured by Ginks and raised in their mystic regime. Two hunters and a domesticated female Gink, Tima (who has some unusual abilities) go on his trail. The time scale seems a bit vague, but it makes for an inventive and different yarn.

THE DEVIL'S MAZE Gerald Suster ROC £4.99

In Victorian London, Dr. Lipsius heads a group of sadistic killers who hunt their victims in bizarre ways for their evil rituals. Seeking to locate and exterminate them is the hedonistic student of the Occult, Charles Renshawe and his mistress, the Lady Clarissa Mountford. The trail they follow is in reality, part of the gang's sinister plot to trap their hunters. Good characters, intricate ideas and a nice Victorian atmosphere, but the pace is slowed by the numerous 'stories-within-the story'.

RETURN OF THE DEEP ONES Brian Lumley ROC £4.99

Four tales of horror and evil owing much to the Lovecraft mythos. A short first yarn sees the stealer of a strange Elixir pursued by a Cult member. Next sees Titus Crow hired to catalogue the library of a 'Lord Of The Worms' who seeks to steal his body. Next a novel of an evil figurine and monsters of the Cthulhu tales. Finally, the arrival of a giant conch shell opens the way for creatures of the sea. All tales are full of slowly growing menace and could well have appeared in the legendary Weird Tales.

TIGANA Guy Gavriel Kay ROC £5.99

Being incapable of reading huge epic fantasies I'll quote the flyer for this 670 page yarn. "King Valentin is invaded by the Wicked King Brandin of Ygrath and in the battle which ensues, Brandin's son is killed. As a mark of revenge, Brandin casts a spell on Tigana so no Tiganans can remember the place's existence. His spell is not total though, since a determined group of people remember the beauty and tranquility of the time before King Brandin and are obstinate in their hopes and desires to break the spell and end their bitter oppression." Now you know, it's up to you to decide if it's your tittle.

LAKE OF THE LONG SUN Gene Wolfe Hodder & Stoughton £16.99

The World (Whorl) Of The Long Sun is the interior of a giant cylindrical generation ship lit by a central tube (Long sun). Its inhabitants have regressed to a mediaeval level, but fragments of the old technology remain. Patera Silk is to lose his parosh buildings to settle tax debts. In an effort to save them, he embarks on a quest which leads him below the surface of his world and to startling discoveries. Second in the 'Long Sun' series and Wolfe is at his inventive best, excellent reading, but in a rather slow and carefully developed pace. Still, if you want to produce a series...

THE ACCURSED Rober E.Vardeman N.E.L. £7.99

Baron Rouwen is faithful to King Priowe, but when a spy warns him of an assassination attempt, it leads him to entrapment and the torture chamber where a wizard makes him immortal - but able to feel exquisite pain. Moreover, anyone he loves, dies at his embrace. Cast out and hunted, (Kill him and he suffers terribly until regrown), he seeks revenge and to rejoin Princess Sorinne whom he loves. A task which pits him against magic and hostile forces.

THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT SINGS THE BLUES Hary Harrison Bantam £14.99

Captured when raiding a Mint, the (teenage) Rat is given 30-day poison to coerce him into infiltrating a prison planet to regain a lost alien artifact, the first ever discovered. With a handful of agents in the guise of a pop group the search begins. It leads them through various dangers, strange societies, hostile locals, adulation and some atrocious puns. The plot and its outcome are highly implausible butis great fun and a lighthearted read. Fast-paced, don't blink or you'll miss something. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

LOST SOULS Poppy Z Brite Penguin £5.99

During Mardi Gras, three vampires on a spree, visit a bar run by Christian, another vampire. One beds a young girl customer and the resultant offspring, 'Nothing' is left as a foundling. Fifteen years later, he is an obnoxious delinquent in search of his origins. The girl's father comes looking for her and the vampires return. Gradually all the threads come together in a melange of drugs, drink, vampirism, violence and sadism. Not for the squeamish.

THE CITY James Herbert Midas £8.99

A 64 page 'graphic novel' and certainly not a 'comic book'. Superbly illustrated with full colour, horrific artwork by Ian Miller. An unidentified traveller stalks his way through the macabre ruins of a post-holocaust city.

He faces attacks by mutants, strange creatures and intelligent rats as he plods remorselessly towards his goal - which is a horror in itself. Slow sections are intrspersed with slam-bang action - 'CRAAK!', 'KABOOM!', 'THOOD!', and 'AAAAGHHH!' abound. If you're into graphic novels and horror, you'll probably love this one.

