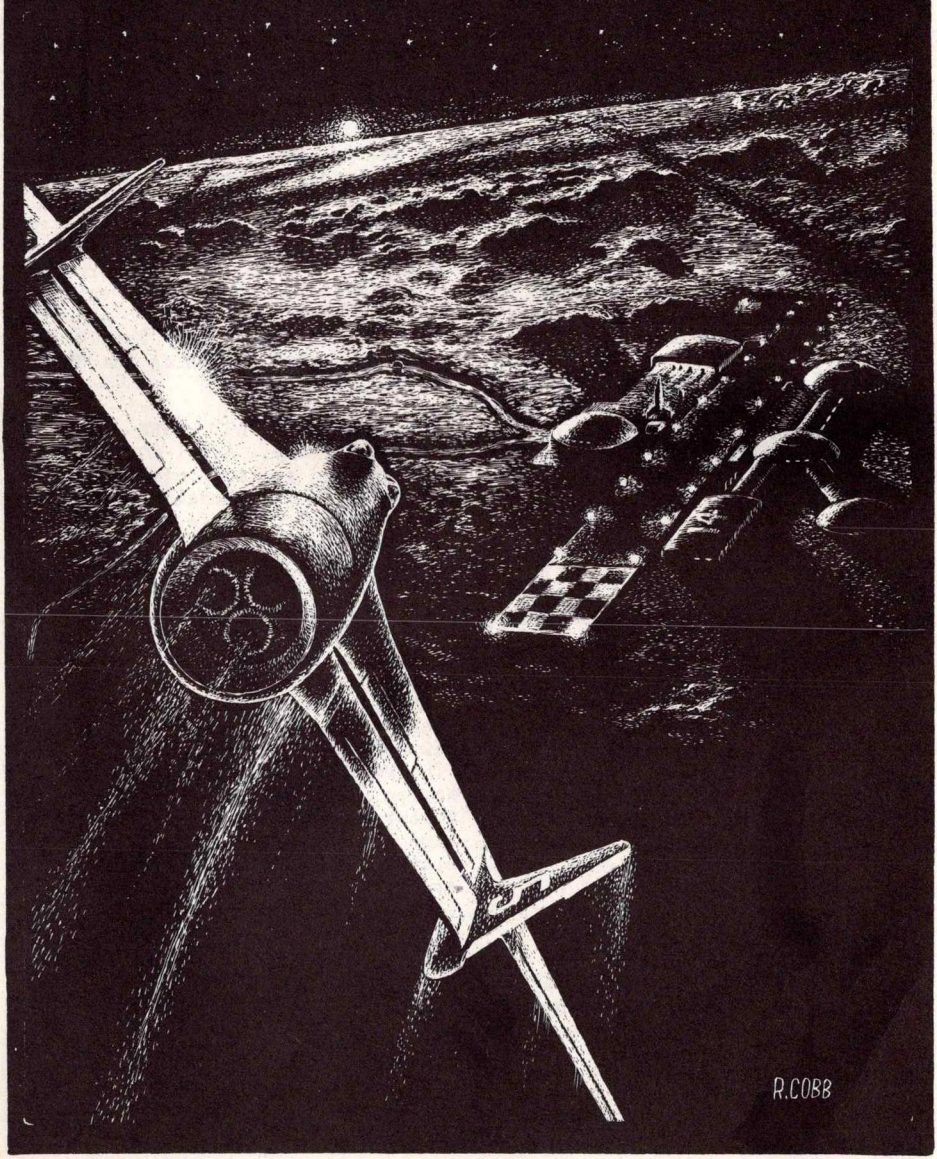
Magnitude

SUMMER 1955 VOL. 1, NO. 2 10¢



EDITORIAL

EVOLUTION OF THE SCIENCE FICTION FILM

Lately it has become increasingly evident that the science fiction motion picture is growing up. Disregarding a few exceptions, such as the excellent "Things to Come," the first science fiction films were mainly bordering on fantasy. The big revolution was when George Pal entered the field with "Destination Moon," still considered one of the best of the scientifilms. Two more Pal films followed, each a succes, and the fourth, "Conquest of Space," is now being released. At the same time that these films were appearing, there appeared many other science fiction pictures, ranging from atrocious to excellent.

Now the second revolution has begun. Walt Disney has broken into the television medium with his excellent "Man in Space" Disneyland show. Four more "Tomorrowland" episodes will be unveiled next year, "The Moon," "Mars," "Autopia," and a program about the peacetime uses of nuclear energy. There will be a rerun of "Man in Space" on Disneyland June 15. Ivan Tors' Science Fiction Theater has started on television, and may be superior to previous efforts of this type. Walt Disney has crashed the theaters with the excellent "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," a boxoffice and critical success, winning three Academy Awards, a record for scientifilms. These new developments mean several things. "Man in Space" shows that the facts of space travel can be presented scientifically and artistically and be interesting to people ranging from those who have no knowledge of astronautics to those who have extensive knowledge in this field. "20,000 Leagues," "Conquest of Space," and Science Fiction Theater (to a somewhat lesser extent) show that Walt Disney, George Pal, and Ivan Tors are realizing that good actors and a good story, while not being the most important thing, do play a vital roll in science fiction films and television programs.

And nowadays, there seems to be a healthy scarcity of films such as "Robot Monster," "Killers from Space," "Cat Women of the Moon," and others of the same type.

Where do we go from here? It's rather apparent that lots of improvements could be made. We're hoping that Walt Disney, after the success of "Man in Space," will continue not only in the television field, but in the movie field as well. Since the "Tomorrowland" series was filmed in beautiful color (which the tv audience, unfortunately, does not see) it is a natural step to release the four-stage rocket, trip to moon, and trip to Mars sequences to theaters as short subjects, or combine them into a full-length feature (which might be less desirable than the former). Also, it would be a big step if he would produce a live dramatic space travel film, in Cinemascope and color, comparable to "20,000 Leagues." If you like any of these ideas, I'd suggest you write Mr. Disney at Walt Disney Productions, 2400 West Alameda Avenue, Burbank, California, and tell him about them. In fact, this is a good policy to follow when you're interested in any SF film or tv or radio program.

At least two SF films of epic proportions are now being planned, "Forbidden Planet" and "Forbidden Universe." See "Plotting the SF Magnitudes, Page 4.

LAST-MINUTE NEWS AND NOTES

On Wednesday, April 20, we were honored to see a special preview of Universal International's Technicolor film spectacle, "This Island Earth." It is apparent that a large amount of money was spent on this film. The first half of the motion picture is excellent, and follows the book rather closely. The second half seems to be a rather corny space opera and a "frantic orgy" of excellent, but sometimes admittedly unscientific, technical effects, pyrotechnics, etc. Rex Reason, star of the picture (not "The Mutant") tells us that the live action of the film was shot about a year-and-a-half ago, the rest of the time being devoted to special effects, miniatures, pyrotechnics, processing, etc. He says he finds acting in a science fiction film much harder than in ordinary pictures, because one must put himself in a character often totally alien to himself, must casually use seemingly meaningless technical terms, and must often react to things that will be dubbed into the picture later, but which are totally absent during the live "take."

----Ralph Stapenhorst

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Short Stories

Article

Special Feature

Regular Features and Columns

Cover by Ron Cobb depicting "Banking in for Landing on Mars"

Interior Artwork by Ron Cobb

Headings by Ron Cobb (Pages 1 & 3), Tad Duke (Pages 4, 5, & 8), and Ralph Stapenhorst (Pages 9 & 13)

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Plotting The SF Magnitudes

BY FORREST J. ACKERMAN

WALT DISNEY himself would have been impressed had he been in his own studio theater recently when the top echelon of Southern California sci-fi talents turned out en masse to applaud his MAN IN SPACE, the hour-long "documentary of the future" that envisions (in color) the conquest by rocket of the region beyond the Earth. This was later shown on television, but could not possibly have been as impressive as on the movie screen. The Disney Studio Theater seats 650 and was about five-sixths full. Almost as legendary as the brief scenes from DIE FRAU IM MOND appearing in the picture was the public appearance of Henry Kuttner and Catherine Moore, who were accompanied by the Bradburys. Invitations had been arranged by G. Gordon Dewey and myself, and we had the pleasure of seeing in the turnout Curt Siodmak, James Schmitz, Mari Wolf, Ross Rocklynne, Chesley Donavan, Kris Neville, Charles Beaumont, Chad Oliver, DeWitt Miller, A.E. van Vogt, Wm.F.Nolan, Mel Sturgis, Rick Strauss, Helen Urban, Len Pruyn, Jean Cox, Arthur Louis Joquel, Russ Hodgkins, Walt Daugherty, Frank Quattrocchi, Paul Blaisdell--a seemingly endless list of celebrities and fans. Ray Harryhausen (animator of "Mighty Joe Young") in the audience told me he had recently completed tearing down the Golden Gate Bridge and rolling an octopus with tentacles a thousand feet long up Market Street in San Francisco for a scientifilm called "It Came from the Ocean Floor." He and Siodmak are now huddling on the possibilities of the latter's early Amazing story, "The Eggs from Lake Tanganyika," as a movie shocker.

Scientifilmwise, preproduction has started on Jack Finney's pocket-book hit, THE BODY SNATCHERS, and Palo Alto Productions has an original up its sleeve about brain-stealers from Aldebaran. L.A.artist Paul Blaisdell is at work constructing a super-hush-hush monster to scare the pants off The Mutant in Raymond F. Jones' THIS ISLAND EARTH, technicolor spectacle of a war of two worlds; Metaluna and the planet Zahgon. By the time you read this THE ISOTOPE MAN should have been completed in England. Hollywood has bought Arthur C. Clarke's The 9 Billion Names of God, and MGM is casting Walter Pidgeon and Anne Francis in its Jupiter epic, FORBIDDEN PLANET. Ed Spiegel calls the job Poul Anderson's done developing the script for FORBIDDEN UNIVERSE "a work of genius" and the art Paul Blaisdell has done for the picture "greater than Mel Hunter." I have recently given Geo Pal a copy of "The President of the United States, Detective" to consider; it's by Gerald Heard, laid in 1990. And Producer-Director Vincent Sherman is avidly reading SLAN!

Two annual anthologies will become one this year with the combining of THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES & THE BEST S.F. NOVELS. Already selected by Dikty are "Mousetrap" (F&SF) by Andre Norton, "Felony" (Galaxy) by James Causey, and "Of Course" (ASF) by Chad Oliver--all, if I may be permitted an agentorial brag, from El Ackerhombre Agency. New Yorkers, in the Sunday supplement of their Post, have also recently been reading sci-fi yarns by Acklients, among them "Disguise" by Donald A. Wollheim, the anthologized "Who's Cribbing? " by Jack Lewis, and one of Art Porges' ubiquitous works.

Ray Bradbury has sold "A Sound

----(Continued on Page 15)

MISSION

· LEWIS KOVNER

Far out in the inky blackness of space the object circled in its never-ending path, as it had done for untold aeons past. It might have been a natural moonlet, but it wasn't. It was a hollow metal ball, some ten feet in diameter, its nearly-featureless surface a dull black so as not to reflect sunlight.

How long ago it had been placed out here in its lonely orbit was a mystery to all but the eternal watching stars, and its obscure purpose locked in the brains of a race that had been less than dust for a hundred million years.

It had been swinging in its orbit as regular as clockwork while great reptiles battled to the death in primeval jungles, and it swung yet, placed out among the stars where rust could not corrode it or earthquakes jar its delicate mechanism.

It swung from pole to pole, at right angles to the planet's plane of rotation, and at a predetermined height, so that it passed over every point on the surface of the planet once each day.

A lonely sentinel, it lay not dead, but like a sleeping snake -- dormant, and waiting. It was here for a purpose, and it had a mission to perform, and the time was near at hand.

Meanwhile, on the planet below, Man was first attempting the release of nuclear energy.

The blockhouse lay squat and ugly under the hot desert sun. An enormous structure of steel and concrete, its hundred-foot length sprawled out like some great alien slug on the smooth, unbroken expanse of sand.

There was nothing but the hot sun overhead, the endless carpet of sand, and the infinitely larger grain that lay as a child's block thrown thoughtlessly aside.

Like a scene frozen forever by the shutter of a camera, it lay motionless except for the whirlwinds of heat, tossing sand carelessly in all directions, and the almost imperceptible movements of the great globe of fire in the sky.

Within the yard-thick walls of the blockhouse there was silence of another kind, the utter electric silence that precedes the breaking of a storm. A storm it would be too, of countless radioactive particles released by the conversion of thirty pounds of U-235 into energy, a storm that would be like nothing ever before seen in the violent history of the world.

The vast room was hushed in the expectant silence as the voice of the President boomed out over the loudspeakers. The multiple amplifiers picked up the sounds and increased their volume until they echoed back and forth between the blockhouse walls like the waves of an angry sea. And the voice told of the greatness of Man, and the unlimited energy of the atom waiting only to be unlocked by the genius and ingenuity of the human race.

But Mark Bridges did not listen. He sat puffing nervously on a cigarette, pausing now and then to wipe his sweating forehead with a none-too-clean handkerchief. Almost involuntarily his troubled gaze wandered across the control board set in the wall in front of him. The panel was a maze of dials and switches. There

were radiation counters, light intensity and heat indicators, air pressure recorders, and in the center a large electric timer whose minute hand was moving slowly but surely toward the zero mark.

Second after second, he thought. Second after second, minute after minute, the seconds and minutes adding up to days and years and centuries, carrying Man down the long and tortuous Road to the Stars.

A long, rocky road it had been, too, and it would be far longer yet. Human progress had been a vast tangent curve, embracing the entire history of Man. Perhaps it had begun with the first ape-man picking up a chunk of dead wood and discovering that it could be used as a weapon to much better advantage than his bare hands. It had started there, but at first progress had been slow. Fire, the wheel, the first simple machine, at an increasingly rapid tempo that had, in the last century, become a rushing torrent which carried progress with it, and swept war and destruction in its wake.

A tangent curve, culminating at infinity.

Bridges' eyes swept across the length of the great room, and through the unreal haze of blue cigarette smoke he watched the faces of the score of men as they sat with breath abated listening to the historic words of the Chief Executive. Carefully he judged their individual reactions, and fancied that he could read their innermost thoughts.

He saw twenty men, twenty different and contrasting personalities, gathered together to witness an event that would have more influence on their lives than anything else had before. Here was a cross section of the people in whose hands would be placed power that had no equal in history, a power that could advance its discoverers hundreds of years, or destroy them.

Everyone had agreed that atomic power would be a great boon, and that it was desperately needed. But were their plans for it the same? To the scientist it would mean whole new vistas of invention and experiment opened up before him, to the soldier a new and more powerful weapon to hasten the day when they would be able to destroy an entire planet with the flick of a switch.

Bridges saw it in their eyes, and he could read it in their hearts. The hate, the old human lust for power was still there, and still dominant. But they would mature. Some day Homo sapiens would learn the need for cooperation and understanding, and only then would the metamorphosis begin. Just as the lowly caterpillar sheds its cocoon to become a beautiful butterfly, so would mankind rid itself of its petty hates and fears and prejudices and emerge as the greatest race that the universe has ever known.

Could there be, he wondered, other races somewhere in the cosmos that evolved as we did, and rose to attain this ultimate goal? Were they even now in mental communication across the vast interstellar gulf, bridged only by whispering tendrils of thought?

Perhaps in time we will know, he thought elatedly. Some day we will know.

Drawn by some uncontrollable urge, his eyes locked on the long red-tipped lever near the center of the control panel. The lever that he, Bridges, would pull in a few short minutes, the lever that would open to Man the final secrets of the atom, or pull down a race, destined to reach the pinnacle of perfection, amid a hail of fission bombs and deadly radiation.

Doubt entered his mind momentarily. For the few fractions of a second that his hand would be pushing the scarlet handle over to its contact, Lieutenant Mark Bridges would be God; in that short moment, with a flick of his arm, he would set the precarious balance of the future of an entire planet, and perhaps of the only sentient life in this galaxy. He would fix the pattern, and perhaps the destiny, of a civilization that was destined to rise to the heights of glory and achievement unsurpassed in the history of a galaxy of forty billion stars, a galaxy that revolves on its axis once in two hundred million years, and had revolved twenty times already. And it would revolve twenty times more basking in the glory of Man.

But which way would the balance be tipped? Somehow he knew it must be--it would be--the right choice.

The sudden strident blare of the loudspeaker jarred him out of his reverie. "X-minus three minutes. Three minutes to firing time. Final check of all instruments. Repeat ,

final check of all instruments."

There was a sudden shuffle of motion to break the strained silence as the technicians took care of last-minute instrument settings. Heavy filters were placed over the camera lenses, and steel covers swung shut over all the view ports. This would not be viewed like an ordinary test explosion or rocket launching.

"X-minus one minute. Repeat, one minute to firing time. Take your posts. Repeat, take your posts."

Bridges unclasped the safety catch on the lever. Until the one minute signal, it had been locked electrically as a precaution against accidental firing, but now he reached forward and snapped it off.

The loudspeaker screamed out at them again. "X-minus thirty seconds. Repeat, thirty seconds."

The cigarette burned down to Bridges' fingertips. He snuffed it out.

"Twenty seconds."

His knuckles were white from the pressure on the handle. He was aware of the perspiration turning to ice at his neck and running down his back in freezing streams, and the hand on the timer creeping, creeping toward what--glory or doom?

"Ten seconds--five..."

Suddenly, in that moment of triumph, he knew, and thought of what Homo sapiens was yet to be.

"...two, one, zero."

With a fierce, exultant fire in his heart, he pulled the lever.

In a five-foot steel cylinder more than a mile away in the desert, two pieces of U-235, their surfaces polished to insure perfect contact, were driven together at great speed. Immediately countless neutrons were sent spinning wildly through the uranium mass. Particles struck uranium atoms squarely on their nuclei, splitting them into fragments with the release of more free neutrons and energy. The released particles struck other nuclei, and the explosion built up to inconceivable violence within scant millionths of a second.

The terrific blast wave, moving at more than a thousand feet a second, was left far behind by the flash of heat and radiation which traveled outward in all directions at the speed of light.

Thousands of miles above this scene of violence a small sphere of dull black metal sprang to life after aeons of dormancy. Tiny follicles which dotted its surface registered and recorded the intensity of the flood of gamma rays and photons emitted by the blast. When the radiation reached a certain level, strange electronic machines flared into life. Electrodes sparkled with energy and copper busbars groaned under the abnormal surge of power. Dozens of antennae emerged from openings in the satellite's skin, and beam after beam of perceptic atomic forces were radiated into space. They fanned out, sweeping through the heavens at speeds vastly greater than that of light--searching, searching....

Ultimately the probing fingers of energy located all the planets of the Solar System. The rays scanned and discarded them as useless, dead bodies....

They turned to the sun, and immediately focused all their power on that point of light. The sun's spectral type, rate of energy emission, and a thousand more vital facts were relayed back to the sphere, where they were recorded as electrical impulses and fed into a calculator. Electronic circuits waited patiently as the computer found the answers.

Within the tiny sphere strange, subatomic forces were beginning to come into play.

No man lived to study the reaction that turned the sun into a nova, which flared up into incredible brightness before sliding completely off the Russel diagram to become a white dwarf.

Far above the flaming hell that had been the only planet inhabited by human life in the galaxy, the thing floated through space, oblivious to the destruction that it had wrought. Freed from the influence of gravity, it swam slowly away from the sun, toward the outer limits of the Solar System, destined to wander forever through the endless reaches of the universe, the universe forever lost to Man.

And inside, a canned radio message burst forth in the utter silence, a message that would be echoed countless light years away in a sealed vault on the third planet of a small G-type star near the galaxy's rim, a message that would go unheard because its makers had died at the height of their achievements countless millenia

----(Continued on Page 10)

The February First meeting of the Chesley Donavan Science Fantasy Foundation was devoted to merry-making and joviality in celebration of the First Anniversary. Refreshments were served, and the members heard a recording of the Orson Welles "Invasion from Mars" program of 1938. The first issue of MAGNITUDE, just back from the printers, was unveiled and distributed to the members.

As far as the night sky from Sirius is concerned, all the equations have been checked, and the positions of some twenty stars have been calculated. Because of the scarcity of accurate data, it has been decided to stop when all available information has been used up, giving the positions of the seventy brightest stars in the Earth's sky and the sky of the hypothetical Syrian planet. An article giving the equations and the results is being readied for a future issue of MAGNITUDE.

Most of the special-effect processes for color photography have been checked and found workable.

The Rocket Research subgroup has had several small private firings, and is planning some larger rockets for future launchings at the Pacific Rocket Society's and the Reaction Research Society's new Mojave Test Area.

Lewis Kovner has developed a new system of weights and measures based on the speed of light and the wavelength of red light. Every conceivable factor has been calculated, including the strength of the standard gravitational field, the yardstick for stellar distances. All astronomical measures have been converted to the new system.

A code language was developed by Paul Shoemaker and Ron Cobb, and promptly shelved as utterly useless and impossible to learn.

Paul Shoemaker has completed a Martian clock, which keeps accurate time to a 24-hour, 37-minute day.

Many of the projects from last month's column are still uncompleted. These include the Tesla coil, the motion pictures, the high-fidelity installation, and the subsonic machine.

Paralleling the movie stock-shot library, a high-fidelity tape library is being collected, recorded from the records of members.

The synthetic language was dropped because of lack of interest.

As for movies, we have a fistful. There are four films planned for production, and they include an art-science-fiction-traveloge about a trip to Mars being produced by Paul Shoemaker, Ron Cobb, and Tad Duke, which will probably be filmed in color slide or filmstrip form first, a film about the building of the first space station, in production in Glendale by Ralph Stapenhorst and the Horizons Enterprises group, and several others.

The complete history of the Foundation, to be entitled THE BOOK, is being prepared in a rich binding for the library.

Congratulations to Ron Cobb and Tad Duke are in order; they just recently broke into the professional world with the sale of two cover paintings to a German science-fiction magazine.

In recent weeks, several new members have joined. Mr. William R.

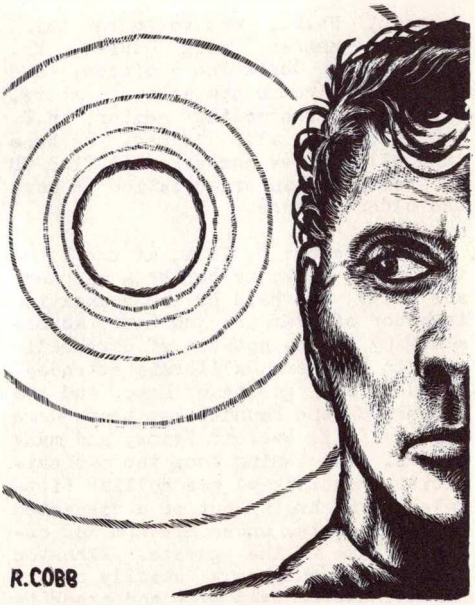
----(Continued on Page 10)

by *chesley donavan*

(PSEUDONYM FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CHESLEY DONAVAN SCI.FANT.FND.)

"What You Don't Know..."

by paul arram



For the twelfth time that week, Roger Gordon wadded the papers on his desk and hurtled them into the fireplace. He then turned to his open notebookand began copying long strings of formulae on a fresh sheet. The hours passed; sheet after sheet fell to the floor covered on both sides with astronomical figures, Greek letters, and strange symbols. As the east lightened and the stars winked out,one by one, he began transferring numbers to points on a sheet of graph paper and joining them with a smooth curve. A long finger of sunlight reached through the living room window and touched the paper he was working on. The last segment of the line was completed.

For the thirteenth time that week, the same answer resulted. He turned and stared hard at the reddened disk resting on the horizon; it was a painful, hopeless expression that he wore.

In another room of the house, an alarm clock sounded faintly. The insistent sound ran its course and died out defiantly. A few moments later, Millie Gordon appeared at the doorway leading to the bedrooms, her hair in curlers, her pink pajamas covered by an old quilted robe.

"Roger, Darling, have you been up all night?"

Still he stared at the rising sun.

"Roger,do you hear me? What's the matter," She walked over to her husband and felt his brow.

He started at her touch. "Oh, it's you, Millie. I didn't come to bed last night."

"No, you certainly didn't. What's the matter,Dear? You look...awful...."

"I--It's just some work I had to finish. Calculations for some plates I need."

"It must have been awfully important. You'll be dead-tired all day today at work."

"Uh, Millie, I won't be going in today. I'll call later and explain."

"Yes, Dear. Breakfast will be ready in a few minutes."

"No,thank you. I'm not hungry.... I think I'll lie out on the sofa and take a nap. Keep the kids quiet when they leave for school, would you?"

"Certainly, Dear, if you wish. Areyou sure you don't want anything?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"All right, Roger. I'll get blankets----"

"Don't bother. Please, just leave me alone for a couple of hours."

"Yes...Roger..." She tip-toed out and closed the door quietly.

Roger Gordon picked up the graph he had finished and sat back in his chair. The curve representing Solar activity was almost parallel to the abscissa for fully half thepage,then, on the line marked as October 2,1967, it made a sharpturn up and went clear off the top of the paper. What else could it mean? he thought. A nova. The sun we've trusted for a million years of human history goes bang and ends it all on October 2. He glanced at the calendar. Today was September 20. Just twelve days left. What could Mankind do to save itself in twelve days? The space station was only half completed a thousand miles up--Alpha Centauri was the nearest place anyone

----(Continued on Page 12)

CD NEWS (Continued from Page 8)

Boorman, Ph.D., was voted our third honorary member. Rick Hansen, Mr. Lee Brooks, Christine Robinson, and Lars Hydle are the new active members. Another corresponding member, W.S. Houston, has also joined. We hope that all the new members will find CD as rewarding an organization as have the older members.

On November 5, 1954, at the beautiful home of Monty Barker, a masquerade party was held by the Foundation in honor of Vampira and Forry Ackerman. Many of the notable sf personalities in Southern California attended. Besides our guests of honor and the members of the Foundation, there were Mari Wolf, E. Everett Evans, and many others. All evening long the mad scientist (Jon Lackey) was pulling fistfuls of raw brains out of a dissected head he carried under his arm and offering them to the guests. Ikhnaton (George Clement) sat stiffly on his throne, the crossed mace and crook in his hands. Frankenstein (Bob Burns) nearly drove Count Dracula (Lionel Comport) sane with his insistance on strangling people; Emperor Cleon (Paul Shoemaker) finally bought him off with a fistful of jewels. Lewis Kovner had the most original costume; he came as a Terran. But it was too disgusting, and we had to ask him to remove the disguise.

None could compete against amateur makeup-man Bob Burns, so Frankenstein won the first prize, a one-way trip to Alpha Centauri. Vampira made a special award to mad scientist Lackey of her mother's thigh bone, and honorable mention went to Emperor Cleon, who refused the honor and left in a huff, wedging his crown in the door jamb.

There was an excellent art exhibit, featuring artwork by Chesley Bonestell, Mel Hunter, Ron Cobb, Tad Duke, Ken Fagg, and others.

Vampira cocktails were served and the guests played chirades, with the LASFS team opposing the CD team with Vampira. LASFS lost; they got a lower time score. All departed for home in high spirits.

Don't worry about the figures in the lower left-hand corner of your membership card; the cataloguing system has been abandoned. Everybody knows everybody else too well to make it a necessity.

We wish to apologize for two typographical errors in the first CD NEWS column: Monty Barker's telescope is a 6-inch, not a 10-inch as announced, and the high-fidelity system will not master 100,000 cycles, but 20,000.

Corresponding membership in the Foundation costs a dollar and a half per year. In return, one receives all issues of MAGNITUDE printed during that year, as well as any special papers put out by the Foundation during the same period. The address of the Foundation is: The Chesley Donavan Science Fantasy Foundation, 1028 W. Burbank Blvd., Burbank, California. Member stationary is free with membership, as are all other symbols of membership, which soon may include a lapel pin. Corresponding members may introduce motions at meetings by mail; written votes will be taken and sent to the author after counting. Participation in projects is limited only by the capabilities of the U.S. mails. Please keep letters short and explicit.

Projects in the Foundation are not undertaken by the whole group, but are actually private projects undertaken by a single member or group of members, with the Foundation acting as a clearing house for reports, etc., on the projects.

----Chesley Donavan

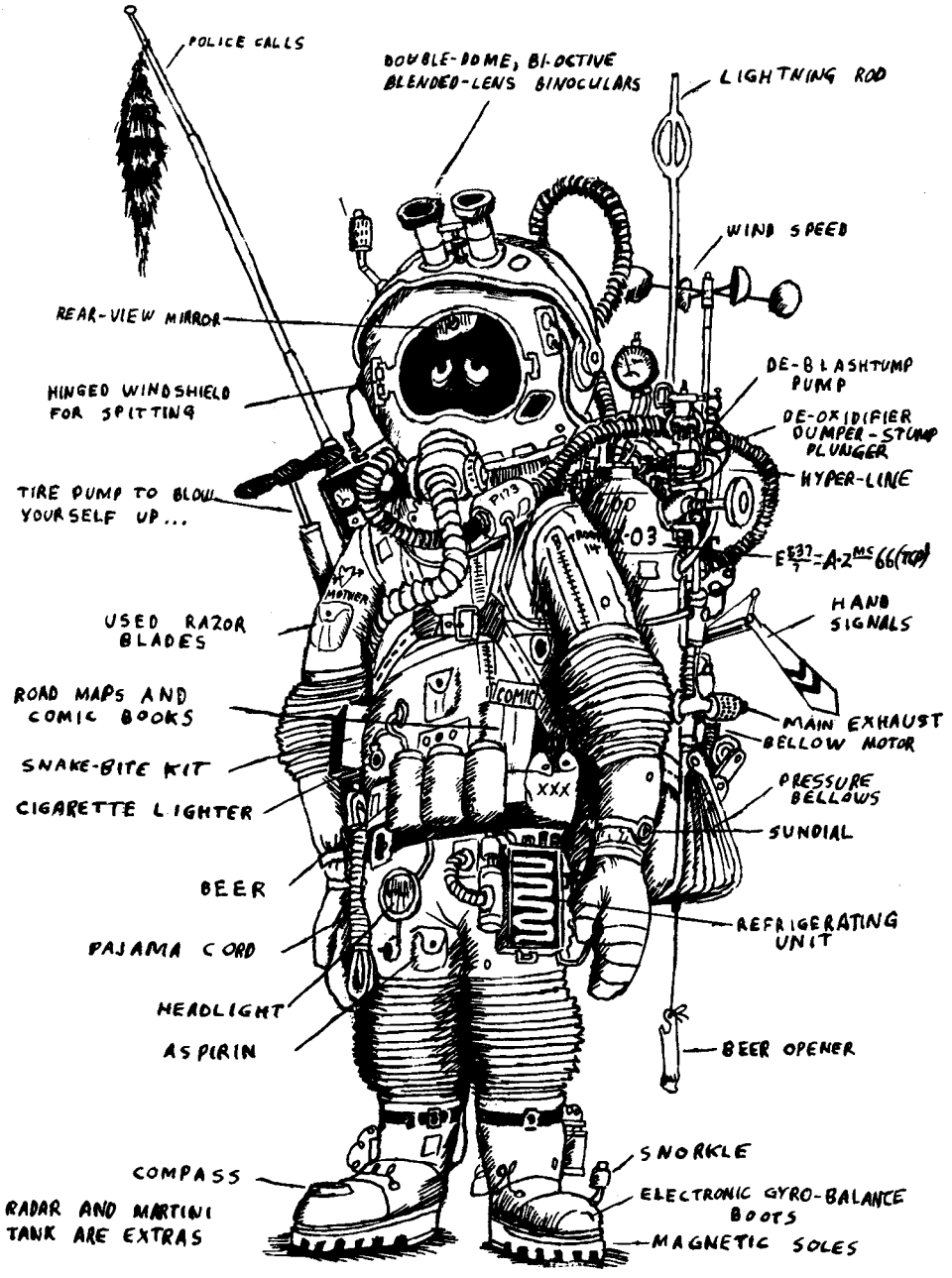
MISSION (Continued from Page 7)

before, and the dust of their bones was less than a memory in the endless stream of time.

"Planet 4, star F4-10076 destroyed as ordered at stage seven of development. Danger to existence permanently averted."

It floated on through space, proud and free, and on its side it bore the name of the planet that had spawned this long dead and glorious race, the race whose destiny had been irrevocably and finally lost because it too had been human, and acted with human failings--Earth.

----Lewis Kovner



WHAT THE WELL-DRESSED U.I.M.I.T.S.D.C.B.A.T.V.C.* MAN WILL WEAR IN 1995

by ron cobb

*United Intergalactic Meddlers in Time, Space, Dimension, Comic Books, and TV Commercials

"WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW..." (Continued from Page 9)

could be safe.

He reached for the phone to call the observatory. They would probably welcome the chance to make such valuable records of a sun in pre-nova stage. It was odd how they had ignored for so long the warnings of the Solar variations that had caused the ice ages, the sunspots, the tremendous eruptions on the sun; and the message of Nova Aquilae fifty years ago when a star exactly like our sun ended its life so spectacularly.

He dialed the number.

All the years he had worked on this theory, all the work he had completed, just to give the world twelve days' warning.

He heard the phone ringing.

Twelve days warning... twelve days warning...

He broke the connection and replaced the receiver.

Twelve days in which to panic, twelve days to live with the terrible fear of impending doom, twelve days of darkness as millions left their jobs for one final taste of life. Twelve days of terror as skeptics took advantage of the situation to seize governments, loot warehouses, destroy all the sanity left. The world would be dead long before October 2....

Millie and the kids....

Roger Gordon took his notebook, carefully tore out the pages and fed them into the fire, one by one. The work of ten years crumbled to ashes. The dream of a lifetime turned to smoke The end of the world would be so quiet and simple....

There was a quiet knock at the door.

"Roger. Roger, are you asleep?"

"No, Millie. Come in."

The door opened quietly and Millie stepped in, a steaming glass of hot milk in her hand. "You really shouldn't go to sleep on an empty stomach, Roger. I brought you...but I thought you were going to rest----"

"I'm all right, Millie. How would you like to take a vacation? We'll rent a cabin up at Yosemite and spend the next two weeks doing nothing at all. What do you say?" He managed a tired smile.

"Roger, are you sure you're well? You've been acting so strangely this morning...."

"Well...I finished my calculations last night and I'm ready to mail them in. Now, I'm due for a vacation. Somebody else can watch the sun for a while; it...won't be doing anything in the next two weeks...."

"But, Roger, the children--"

"Take them out of school. Hurry and pack, before I change my mind. We can be ready to go when the kids come home this afternoon."

"All right, Roger. I'll pack right away. And you can't fool me. All last night you were planning our vacation as a wonderful surprise." She walked over to his desk. "You big wonderful husband, you." She kissed him lightly. "Now you promise me you'll go right up to bed and not get up till I call you. And her, drink this."

He took the glass from her. "All right, Nurse. Patient willing."

"Come along."

He rose and followed her out of the room. He could rest now. His job was finished. No one would know until the end.

Humanity could die with its boots on.

----Paul Arram

COMING UP... by the editor

Scheduled for future publication are:

"Is Science Fiction Escape Literature?" by Helen M. Urban

"How to Become a Science-Fiction Writer--Like Me" by Ed M.Clinton, Jr.

"Reality Inc." by Ronald Voigt

"Life as We Don't Know It" by Paul Arram

There will also be other articles, stories, and poems, plus our regular features.

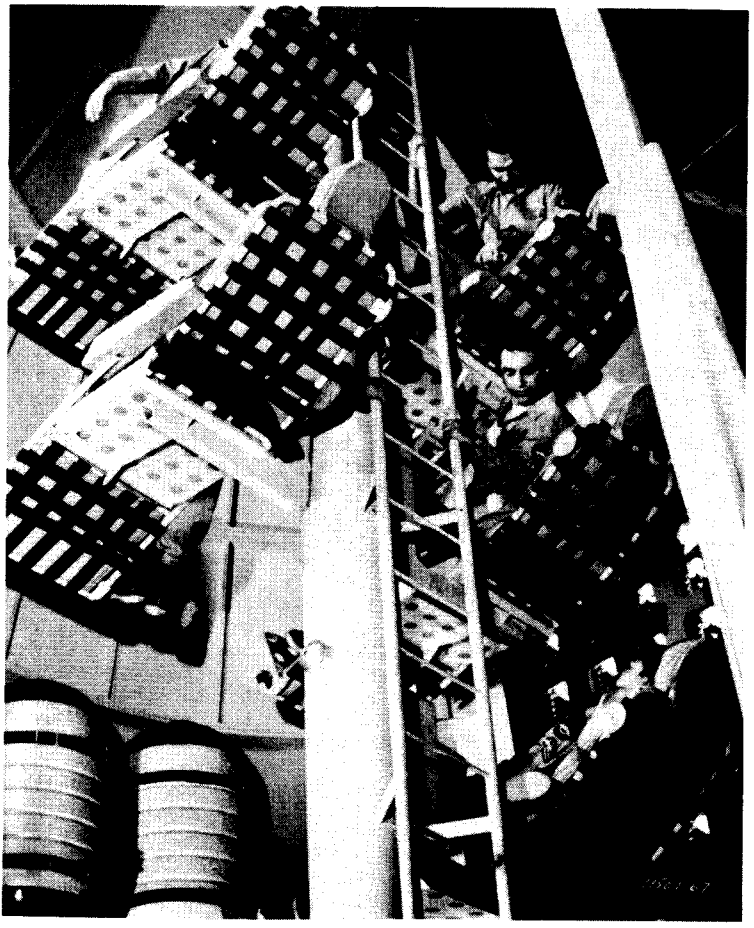
Of course we'll have our regular artists, and maybe some more, too.

How about that story, article, poetry, or artwork by you? We need more material, and badly. We'd still like a letter column, but we've received too few letters. The same goes for the material-rating column.

Also, we urge you to send us that 50¢ for a subscription, 10¢ for a single copy of the next issue, etc.

We're considering the idea of making the magazine larger, and charging slightly more for it. What do you think?

FILMING THE



The picture above shows how Paramount constructed the set of the interior of the Mars rocket for "Conquest of Space." Copyright 1954 by Paramount Pictures Corporation.

"CONQUEST OF SPACE"

BY RALPH STAPENHORST

"Conquest of Space" is the latest science-fiction film spectacle to emanate from George Pal and Paramount. It is filmed in Technicolor and concerns the first space flight to Mars via "The Wheel," a man-made space station circling some 1075 miles above the earth.

For over a year, several dozen hand-picked Army volunteers have been living on the wheel-shaped space station and building a space ship which would first make a trial flight to the moon, and then would proceed to Mars. However, a winged transport arrives from Earth bringing supplies, replacement personel, and Dr. George Fenton (William Hopper), a noted scientist. Fenton notifies Colonel Samuel Merritt (Walter Brooke) of his

promotion to general, and then hands him orders to proceed at once to Mars, to find more raw materials to replace Earth's rapidly diminishing store of these supplies

The von Braun-type rocket, outfitted with giant wings for landing on Mars, blasts away from the space station and heads for Mars with Merritt and a crew of four others, including his son Barney (Eric Fleming). Moments later, they discover a stowaway, Sergeant Mahoney (Mickey Shaughnessy).

During the trip, however, General Merritt begins acting more and more strangely. He questions the wisdom of Man's conquest of space, and tries to tell the crew that they are entering "...the sacred domain of the Lord."

A few days later, as conflicting emotions are building up in the ship, one of the crewmen is killed by a meteorite while he and another crewmember are attempting to free a communications line on the hull of the ship. Merritt regards this as an omen, and when he later talks to Fenton over the ship's radio, he says that if it were possible he would return the rocket to The Wheel's orbit, blow it up, and destroy all plans for building another.

Days later, the ship is ready to land on Mars. Merritt refuses to land, but Barney seizes the controls and manages to bring the ship in safely. While the rest get out on the surface of Mars, Merritt remains inside and decides to open the water valves. When Barney sees the water coming out of the ship, he dashes into the rocket and tries to stop his father. Merritt pulls a revolver on Barney, and in the ensuing scuffle Merritt is killed. Mahoney enters and blames the death of the general on Barney.

During the following months of their stay on Mars, while Barney is in command of the expedition, Mahoney's bitterness towards Barney increases, and he promises that Barney will be court-martialed back on Earth.

Finally, the day of departure, when the earth and Mars are in the correct positions relative to each other, arrives. The men are preparing to leave when a "Marsquake" rocks the planet and jars the ship so that it leans to an angle from which it is impossible to take off.

After fruitless attempts to straighten the ship, Barney walks over to his father's grave and stands there in silent prayer. Suddenly, Barney finds himself sinking swiftly into the soft sand. He is nearly engulfed in it, but is rescued by Mahoney. When Barney tries to thank him, Mahoney replies that he is only saving him for their date on Earth.

Suddenly, one man points to the sand. In a narrow line, stretching as far as they can see, there is a continuous movement of the sand, indicating the existence of underground cavities. This gives Barney an idea. If they can open the cavities by blasting the rockets, they might be able to draw off enough soil to straighten the ship.

The men climb into the ship. Barney fires the rockets, and after a few agonizing moments, the ship blasts into the sky. Angry tears burn in Mahoney's eyes as he looks at the General's grave through the ship's television screen. He is about to say something when he notices the grief on Barney's face as he, too, watches the grave.

A few moments later, Mahoney turns to the others and makes the statement that it was wonderful the way the General died, sacrificing his life to bring the ship to a safe landing on the planet. Realizing what he has in mind, Barney agrees and promises that history books will call it a fitting end for a great soldier and the man who conquered space.

According to Producer Pal, this picture is based on all available scientific data on the subject of space travel. Chesley Bonestell informs us that Wernher von Braun saw the film and was impressed by its accuracy. None of the action takes place on Earth, all of it taking place on The Wheel, in space, or on the planet Mars; therefore all the sets had to be built by Paramount's artists and technicians. Supervising the building of the sets were Hal Periera, who also worked on "War of the Worlds," and Mac Johnson, unit art director on the film.

The principal set was The Wheel and its many sections, including a communications room, recreation room, mess hall, and living quarters. Also included is a gigantic color television set on which the crew watch a world-wide telecast, featuring their wives and loved ones, the night before they leave for Mars.

The interior of the Mars rocket posed an obvious problem; it had to be able to be tipped, since when the ship takes off, "down" is toward the rockets, and while gliding in the atmosphere of Mars like an ordinary plane, "down" is toward the keel of the rocket. The acceleration couches were made so that they could be folded into chairs as in Wernher von Braun's three-stage and Mars rockets. The extensive rocket set also includes a large astrodome, a dome-like window in front of the crew, and the usual instruments, lights, ladders, hatches, and airlocks. Free fall conditions are, of course, depicted.

An excellent set was built of the base of the rocket, part of its wings, and the surface of Mars. The landscape is barren and no life is seen on the planet, since it would be rather out of place in a picture of this kind.

Among the other full-scale sets built were the airlock and part of the exterior of the Mars rocket in space, and a small, unenclosed space tasi, used to ferry men, etc., to and from the ship and the station.

The space suits are very well-designed and built, looking much like those in Across the Space Frontier. They are far superior to those worn in "Destination Moon." Also quite good are the suits, complete with an air supply, used on the surface of Mars, and the men's uniforms themselves.

All the miniature scenes except those on Mars are matte shots. Some

----(Continued on Page 16)

PLOTTING THE SF MAGNITUDES (Continued from Page 4)

of Summer Running" to the Saturday Evening Post...Tony Boucher has grabbed with glee Oliver & Beaumont's sequel to "The Last Word," called "I, Claude"...Beaumont has just made his 7th sale to F&SF: "The Vanishing American"...PEN will publish a David Grinnell original, "The Egg from Alpha Centauri"...Marion Zimmer Bradley and servifan Dave Hammond have sold a long one, "Dark Intruder," to Planet. My "Death Rides the Spaceways," from THE AUTHENTIC BOOK OF SPACE, has been translated into German. Kris Neville's "Old Man Henderson" appears in the first issue of Japanese prozine Seiun (Nebula) along with Judy Merrill's little gem, "That Only a Mother" ... Donovan's Brain has just been pubbed in Portuguese, as has been "O Mundo Marciano" by Ray Bradbury, "Missão Interplanetária" by van Vogt, and Festus Pragnell's perennially popular "Green Man of Kilsona."

The 7th annual Fanquet, sponsored by the LASFS, this year honored Ed M. Clinton Jr., popular member of the club who has formerly served as both its director and secretary. Clinton's professional appearances include anthologization in S.F. MUTANTS (Conklinthology) with "The Smallworld of M-75" from IF, "Overload" in Startling, and "That For a Hermitage" in Fantastic Universe. The lead story from his book of shorts, Puzzle Box, will be anthologized in MR. SCIENCE FICTION SELECTS. "Epidemic," a portion of a longer work, Voyage in the Dark, is expected to be purchased by Fantastic U. Clinton gave a hilarious "lecture" on "How to be an Author ...Like Me," a topic on which he said he was thoroly qualified to speak. As Master of Ceremonies, I introduced to the 50 banqueteers E. Everett Evans, first winner (1947) of the Fanquet; Len Moffatt, 1951's co-winner; Rory Magill, E. Mayne Hull, T.D.Hamm, Kris Neville, Chas.Neutzel, Tad Duke, Gordon Dewey, Ron Ellik, A.E. van Vogt, and other well-known persons present. A hi-lite of the evening was the ritualistic ceremony in which a nearly nonplussed Helen Urban came near to passing out when she learned of her first sale. It was a case of "please pass the smelling salts" when she was told her story, "Please Pass the Salt," had been purchased by Ted Carnell for publication in Science - Fantasy. Incidentally, if the editors of Magnitude can keep a secret from this new author, whom they see frequently, Helen Urban will not know till she reads in here that I have selected her original short-short, "To Serve Ma'am," for inclusion in my big book for Britain with the gems by Asimov, Leiber, Beaumont, John W. Campbell, MacLean, Neville, Rocklynne, Causey, Bradley, L. Ron Hubbard, L. Major Reynolds and over a dozen others.

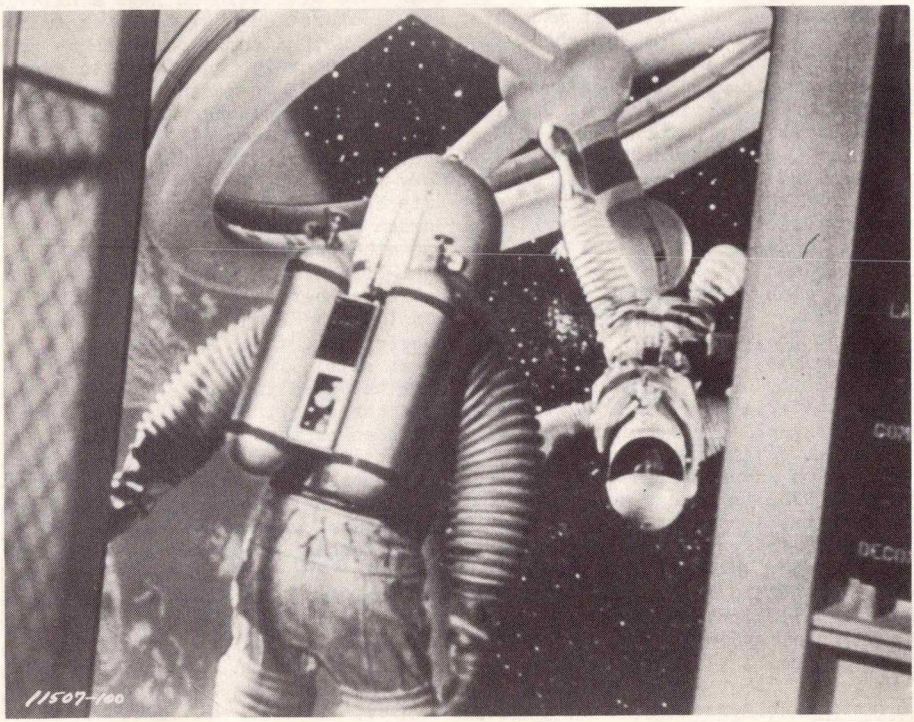
----Forrest J. Ackerman

of these include both live action and models in the same shot, making the models look realistically full-size. Among the models are The Wheel, the winged Earth transport, and the Mars ship, which is a giant flying wing (apparently outfitted with jet motors for operation in the atmosphere of Mars)on which is fastened the bullet-shaped rocket proper, which is in turn fastenedto a mass of fuel tanks, girders,and rocket nozzles for use in space itself. Also built was a model of the planet Mars for long shots and some beautiful models of the surface of Mars close-up. Also, as far as I can tell, a model of the Earth from the space station was used for the scenes of The Wheel in space.

Byron Haskin directed the film. With Pal he had earlier workedon "The Naked Jungle" and "War of the Worlds," which is reported by Paramount as having been a phenomenal box-office success. The screenplay (which is supposedly based on the book of the same name by Bonestell and Ley, but has a much greater resemblance to Dr. Wernher von Braun's Mars Project) was writtenby James O'Hanlon(of "Destination Moon") and Philip Yordon, with Barre Lyndon (of "War of the Worlds") adapting. Chesley Bonestell did the astronomical artwork, and John Fulton directed special effects. Although most of the cast are not well-known in the motion picture world, nearly all are accomplished on Broadway or television. The cast includes Walter Brooke, Eric Fleming, Phil Foster, Mickey Shaughnessy, William Redfield, Ross Martin, William Hopper, John Dennis, Vito Scotti, Joan Shawlee, Geogiann Johnson, and Iphigenie Castiglioni, once named by George Bernard Shaw as "the greatest actress to grace the stage."

Despite a few minor shortcomings, this picture may easily be the best science-fiction picture of 1955. By all means, don't miss it!

----Ralph Stapenhorst



In the scene above, one man pauses at the door of the space ship, while another floats in space, with "The Wheel" in background, Earth below. Copyright 1954 by Paramount Pictures Corporation.