

Out of the Bin



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A Newsletter from MERV BINNS
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Dear Readers,

Well, what have I been doing since my 70th birthday bash? As usual, working in mine and other peoples' gardens, watching less than usual TV due to a lack of anything other than the usual series on screen that had not been screened numerous times before, seeing my beloved Collingwood football team lose more games than they won, watching movies at the cinema occasionally and reading various SF books and fanzines, the latter including those which embarrassingly show photos of me at my birthday party and say nice things about me.



ERIC PRESTON
1928 - 2004

Sadly we had a funeral to attend on the 30th of August. Helena's stepfather, Eric Preston, passed away on the 23rd, apparently after a heart attack. He was 76 but had been ill for some time. He loved his movies, particularly the MGM movies and he read a wide variety of books, no SF but many about the movies.

We will miss him.



PETER McNAMARA (centre) with TERRY DOWLING (left) and SEAN McMULLEN (RIGHT) after the 1991 Ditmar Awards

I was sorry to learn at Continuum 2 that my Adelaide friend **PETER McNAMARA** had passed away recently. He had made it to Continuum 1 last year and I was pleased to say hello. Peter published the magazine *APHELION* for which I provided my modest history of SF in Australia articles, for which Peter actually paid me, being the only thing that I have written that I was ever recompensed for. Following the demise of the magazine Peter continued to foster Australian SF writing and publishing with his Aphelion Books, in which he gave Sean McMullen his start and others including Terry Dowling. I believe that he was still editing and encouraging writers right up to the last. It is fitting that **The Mac** award has been established in Peter's honour.

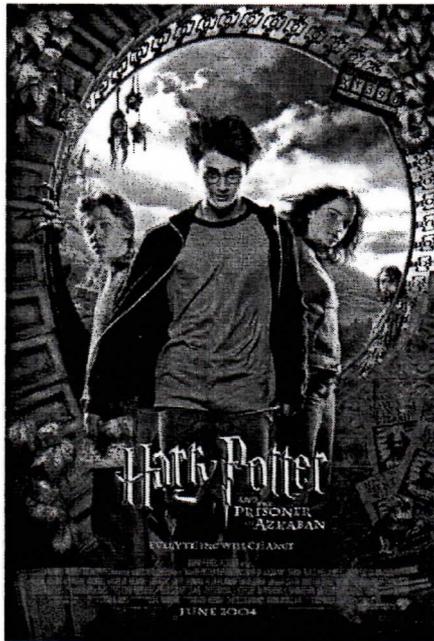
It was nice to hear from old friend Andy Porter from New York and to receive his fanzine newsletter and a clipping reporting the passing of another SF personality in **Hugh B. Cave**. He was a prolific writer over 75 years - fantasy and SF and much more. A writer who, beginning with the pulps, helped shape the genre as we knew it.

You really start to realise your age when personalities who have been a part of your life pass on. I was actually surprised to see the star of the classic old movie *King Kong*, **Fay Wray** died in August at the age of 96. I have seen the movie quite a few times and have even occasionally played a "pokies" (poker machine) game based on it. How many times have various things reminded me of it! And talking about old movies, Bruce Gillespie and Elaine Cochran gave me a DVD of *Metropolis*, which is a definitive compilation of all the various versions, made up from the numerous takes that Fritz Lang directed. As with a lot of DVDs now, additional material to the movie itself tells how this new version was put together and more.

I have always been interested in movie music. That is, the soundtrack accompaniment to the movies over the years by such composers as Enio Morricone, John Williams and many more including **Jerry Goldsmith** and **Elmer Bernstein** who both died recently. Goldsmith in particular I have heard the music of, probably more than any other because he composed the themes for various *Star Trek* productions. Elmer Bernstein composed movie music such as the soundtrack for *The Magnificent Seven*, *The Great Escape*, and if I remember correctly, the theme for the TV series *Riverboat*. That reminds me that I have not been playing my CDs, records or tapes very much recently. I must do so and enjoy the music all over again.

MOVIES

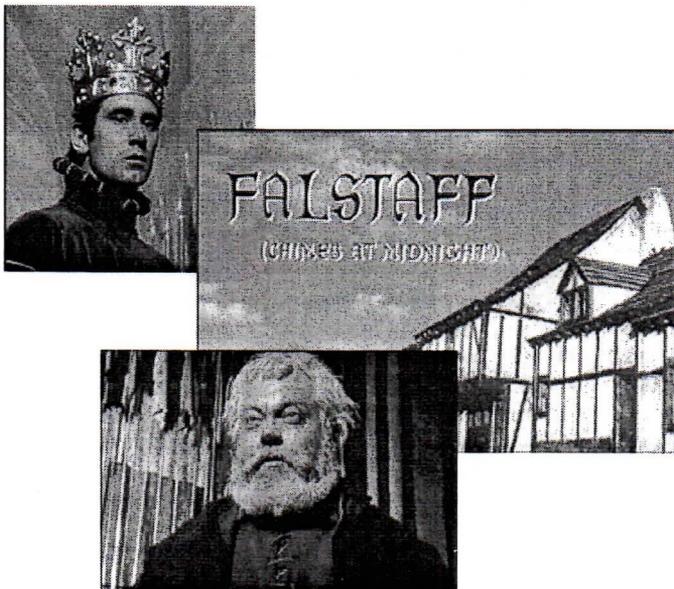
There are so many movies coming out now that I am interested in seeing, I could go to the cinema two or three times a week, but finances limit it to three or four a month, if I am lucky. There is lots of recent stuff on the cable TV but there again the cost is also prohibitive.



HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN, the movie based on the third book in the *Harry Potter* series, will be followed I believe by two more books and movies. It is a good tale with plenty of humour and adventure, with great sfx thrown in. The sets and all round visual aspects of the movie were great, as to be expected but the

story did not grab me any more than the earlier movies. It was just great to see more of the same plus new similar gimmicks with similar impact and I am looking forward to seeing more. I was particularly impressed with the animated effects such as the talking paintings again and the nasty tree. The scenery including the country side and specially the buildings housing Hogwarts College with pointed turrets, the flyovers and all, which did seem a bit more spectacular than in the previous two movies.

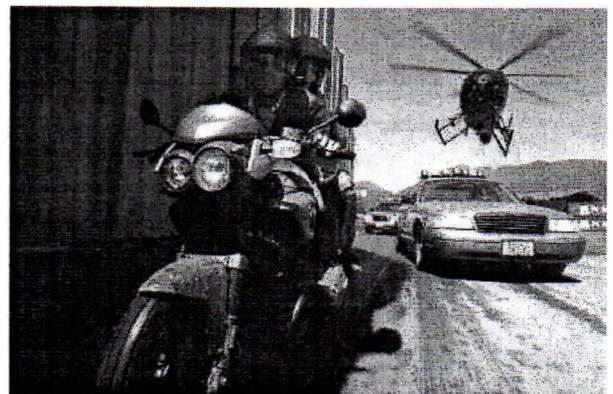
CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT, with the late Orson Welles playing the leading role of Shakespeare's character Falstaff and directing, was, if you like Shakespeare, very good. The screening was spoilt for me however by not being able to hear properly and consequently not understanding most of the dialogue and in such a play as this that was very regrettable. Welles, John Gielgud and other actors not so familiar to me, gave outstanding performances. The sets inside the castle were sparse but



nevertheless at times quite spectacular and seemingly very authentic for the time of Henry IV, and the battle scene seemed to be one of the most realistic that I have seen in any movie. However I doubt that I could sit through it again and that is a pity because I normally appreciate the language of Shakespeare, not that this is all his, being a cobbled together rendering of the Bard's work to feature Falstaff, but I heard very little of it.



We saw the second *Spiderman* movie and I enjoyed it with some reservations. I find it difficult, I guess, to "suspend my disbelief" in relation to some comic book super heroes and although I wanted to enjoy **SPIDERMAN 2**, watching him fly enormous distances in the caverns of New York buildings, swinging on his web, was hard to take. However it was a good story and pointing out once again that some superheroes are only human after all, with as to be expected some outstanding special effects. It was left wide open at the end for another movie.



BEN AFFLECK and UMA THURMAN on a bike, evading pursuit in the near-future techno-thriller PAYCHECK

We finally got to see **PAYCHECK**, which we missed on its short run in the theatres, when friend Dick Jenssen screened his DVD copy of it for us. I cannot understand why it was not more popular and was largely canned by the critics. It is basically "Philip K. Dick gone James Bond" with lots of thrills, chases, a villainous adversary for the hero, fabulous sets, scientific gimmickry, some of the best looking futuristic architecture I have seen and more. I loved it and I would rate it at least 8 out of 10. Ben Affleck was okay in the lead role, with Uma Thurman as the female lead being I guess adequate, but for some reason I am not greatly impressed with her. P. K. Dick had some great ideas but in general I did not like reading his SF. However the adaptations seen of his tales into movies have I think been well done and for the most part come out better than the originals.

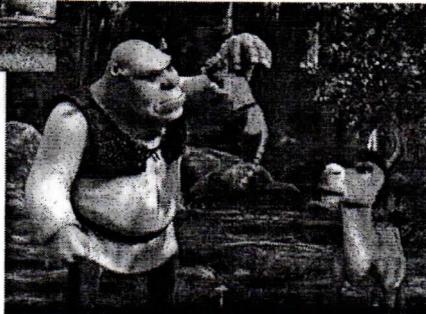
Helena does not like watching animated movies as much as I do and I must say I feel sorry that she has not enjoyed all the early Disney movies and cartoons that I loved.



But she did watch the first *Shrek* movie on TV. She liked it, so we both went to see *SHREK 2*. Needless to say the animation is great and the story is just as funny as the first one. What a twisted fairy tale it is, but it all ends "happily ever after", though not quite as you might expect most fairy tales to end.



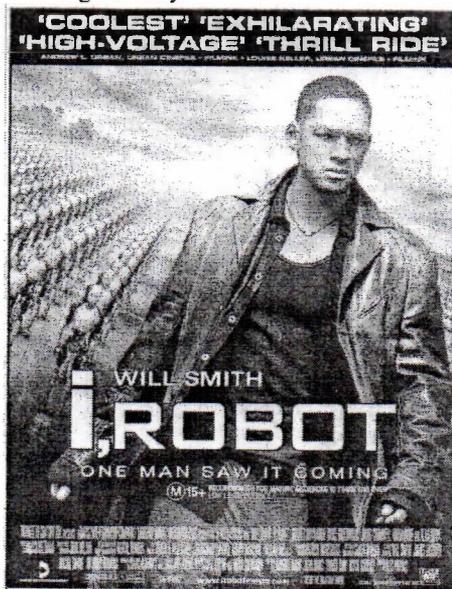
The characters are just as great as in the first movie, particularly the new guy on the block, Puss In Boots, with Antonio Banderas,



(Zorro) doing the voice-over.

The King - Fiona's father, not the objectionable weed in the first one - was good, with John Cleese doing his voice, while Julie Andrews voiced her mother the Queen. The nasty fairy godmother was also well done, by Jennifer Saunders of TV's *Absolutely Fabulous*. All in all, an enjoyable romp.

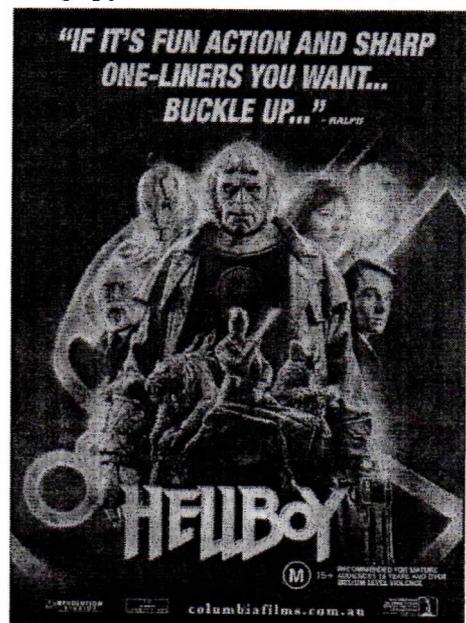
Well, we both went to see *I ROBOT*, starring Will Smith, with some trepidation, both having always been devoted Asimov readers. Like *The Lord of the Rings* but even more so, it deviates from the original story, being more of a spin-off than anything to do with the original story.



But I think that we both looked at it for itself and relatively enjoyed it. I was not sold on the form the robots took but otherwise I thought the special effects were okay and although they danced around the Three Laws of Robotics the plot was fair enough. It was disappointing that Harlan Ellison's screenplay based much more closely to Asimov's original story, published in book form in 1994, never made it to the screen, but it was considered too difficult to make at the time. These days we know that they can do almost anything, so why did we have to have this unsatisfactory adaptation which barely adheres to Asimov's ideas? (Helena notes that Asimov himself in his introduction to Ellison's screenplay anticipated that fans might react this way to a movie adaptation that didn't adhere faithfully to the original. He said that he wouldn't expect it to, that the dramatic requirements of the visual medium make almost impossible to interpret the written narrative faithfully and still make a good movie.)

Having seen the trailer for Vin Diesel's *CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK* I felt that I had to see it, even if it was a lot of garbage and I must admit it was. The plot was crap and the only saving grace, if you could call it that, was some of the sets and scenery. The costumes were stupid, the whole concept was dumb and for the life of me I do not know what encouraged Dame Judi Dench to appear in it as a life form called an "elemental". It might be classed as a science-fantasy with more of the fantasy being prominent but over all a fine example of movie makers not having a bloody clue about what makes sense, a coherent plot or what the hell they were doing.

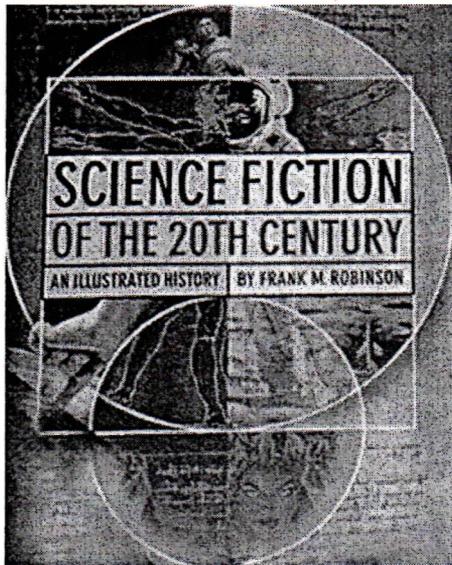
HELLBOY starring Ron Perlman, John Hurt and others, is based on a comic and if you appreciate all the mumbo-jumbo in most comics you will love this one. It is the biggest load of rubbish you will ever see, but particularly well done, with great special effects a crazy but mostly coherent story and a good bit of humour. The big ugly star Perlman - TV's lion-man in *Beauty*



and the Beast and various other appropriate roles - is really great and obviously enjoys hamming it up. Ok, it is more than crazy with lots of horrible monsters, a reincarnated Rasputin and more, but all the kids, large and small will love it.

Needless to say, the last two are movies I saw alone. Another bit of sort of SF rubbish we watched on the box was Jet Li's *THE ONE*, which allowed him to demonstrate his martial arts abilities, enhanced by special effects. He plays a double role of a guy knocking off all his counterparts in various other dimensions and so absorbing their strength. That is, until he meets his counterpart in our world who is his match of course.

BOOKS

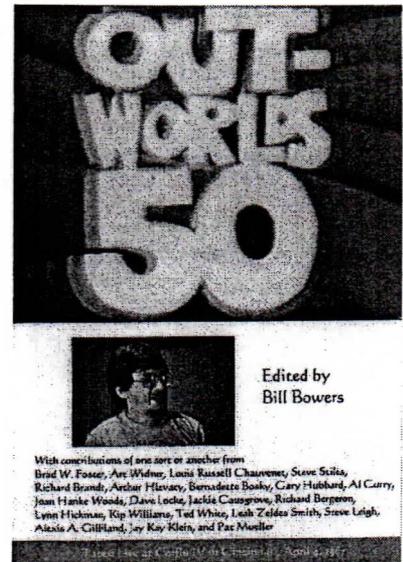


There have now been published a number of illustrated books that have endeavoured to give a history and/or reference to science fiction literature and movies. John Clute's *SCIENCE FICTION ENCYCLOPEDIA ILLUSTRATED* being the best visually with lots of authors photos, book covers, movie scenes and all, but I still found it hard to find details in it that I wanted. For pure reference you cannot beat Don Tuck's *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, the detail on authors and their works is unsurpassed, but unfortunately it only covers up to the 1960s. Peter Nicholls' *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* is more up-to-date and very useful. And there are more illustrated books that I could remind you of, but I digress. *SCIENCE FICTION IN THE 20th CENTURY An Illustrated History* compiled by **Frank M. Robinson**, published by The Collector's Press, is not an encyclopedia or intended I believe as a reference. It is simply a beautifully illustrated nostalgic ramble through the SF field from its beginnings with the pulp magazines, showing reproductions of covers of a well chosen range of the zines and books, with notes and anecdotes with each illustration about the editors or authors, the stories and more. It is a great souvenir for all of us who have lived through the better part of the 20th century and been readers of SF, and have been a part of fandom. Robinson sums it all up beautifully in a chapter headed *The Death of Science Fiction* – well, as we know it at any rate. How we fans all discovered SF, how we share interests in so many other associated things such as space exploration, how we were regarded as nuts by other people and all. SF has now more or less become part of the mainstream Frank points out to us but as I see it, far from dying it is now part of literature the same as any other category. I enjoy having this book to read and browse through again and again and regard it as a gem in my SF collection.

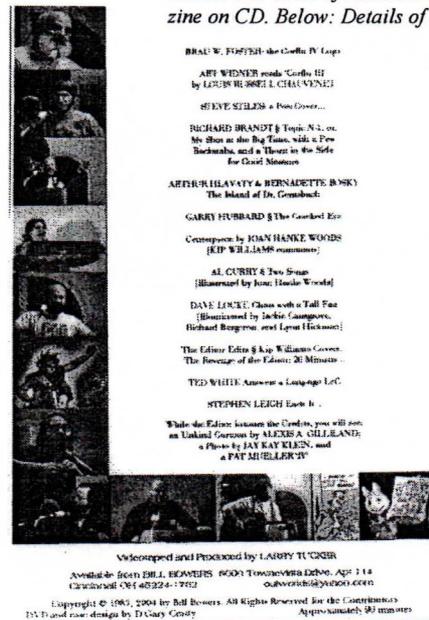
LETTERS AND FANZINES

American long-standing fanzine editor **Bill Bowers** sent Dick Jenssen his 50th issue of his long running zine *OUTWORLDS*, which took the form of a DVD and asked Dick to make copies and pass on to any other fans who would be interested. Naturally Dick did a copy for us. Basically it is the proceedings of *CORFLU Convention 1987*, held in Cincinnati. Starting with a guy I have met, Art Widner, various fans speak about their zines, fandom, conventions and all. All in all it is like attending a con without actually being there and being introduced to people who share my interests and after all, I have been producing my versions of fanzines now for fifty years. Why do I/we do it? Well, I just enjoy writing about things that Helena and I have experienced and all, with the added satisfaction of producing

something that I can send to friends and keep in touch. Thanks Bill, this DVD was a neat idea. Good luck to **Bruce Gillespie**, our leading fanzine producer, who will be a guest at the next *CORFLU* convention.



Above: The cover of **BILL BOWERS'** zine on CD. Below: Details of contributors



Other zines. Thanks to **Bill Wright** for the latest *IRS* with my visage on the cover, incorporated with one of Dick Jenssen's spectacular astronomical backgrounds in full colour (reprinted more modestly in grey on *Out of the Bin #28*, the birthday issue) and Dick's report on my birthday barbecue, and to **Bruce Gillespie** and **John Hertz** for their zines. (Bruce has produced a special issue, nicely illustrated with colour photos, detailing the tribulations of staying in business and producing fanzines whilst in the throes of packing up and moving house.) Thanks also to all the other friends who have sent me their zines and I will comment on them all in due course.

If you want to keep up with all the cons coming up and other fanish events in Australia and abroad, you should subscribe to **Edwina Harvey's AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION BULLSHEET**. For details contact Edwina on AUSSBULL-owner@yahoo.com or 12 Flinders St., Matraville, NSW, Australia.

MERV B. August 27th 2004