

'ROBBY GAMBLE' Artwork by Ditmar

On an alien world, Robby the Robot explores the enigma of the uncollapsed wave function with the aid of the latest in the technology of infinite improbability – a brace of Las Vegas style poker machines ("pokies" to Aussies, "slots" to Yanks) enhanced by the power of lightning to strike more than once in the same place. No, of course he's not hopelessly addicted. He needs the second one to verify the results of the first. (At least, that's his story and he's sticking to it!)

A Newsletter from MERV BINNS
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Dear Readers,

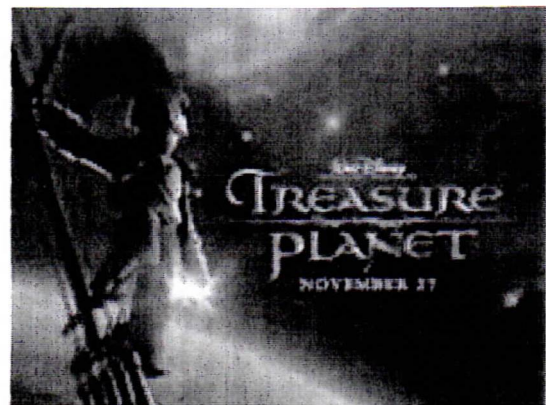
When it comes to politics, we are very good at backing the losers. Not only do we have another four years or so of John Howard and his Liberal party mates running the country, now we have to put up with another four years of George Bush running the world. I don't think that I can watch the TV news any more and have to put up with his self-satisfied smirk, looking like a Cheshire cat that has just swallowed a mouse. Apparently the "majority" of USA citizens thought he was doing a good job and backed his war-mongering tactics in invading Iraq, or maybe they thought that Kerry was just not up to the job. Oh well, so be it!

While Americans were voting in their election, on the first Tuesday in November Australians were placing bets on the horses in the Melbourne Cup, which is, in case you do not know, "the race that stops a nation".

(Proportionately more Australians watch or listen to the broadcast of the Melbourne Cup than Americans turn out to vote!) I do not think I have ever backed the winner and of course I missed out again when the good mare Makybe Diva won it for the second year running. After watching the race on the big screen at Crown Casino with Helena, I went off to the movies to see *ALIEN V PREDATOR*. Having seen all the previous *Alien* movies I wanted to see this one on the big screen, despite its bad reviews. I am fascinated by special effects and computer animation and that did not disappoint me in this movie. I avoid most modern horror movies like the plague but I can put up with a bit of blood and guts if a movie is visually spectacular and well done. Not only were the monsters in this movie as fascinating as ever, the under the ice pyramid structure they find in Antarctica gave the movie shades of *Indiana Jones* and *Tomb Raider*. Plot-wise I guess I have to admit the movie was not great. Ripley was not in this one, but the young lady who is the main character survives the blood-bath as her counterpart did. Okay, the movie is by some standards a load of crap, but I enjoyed it at any rate.



One of the first books I ever read was *Treasure Island* and I have loved tales of pirates and such ever since. There have been some outstanding adventures in this category on the screen, including the recent Johnny Depp movie *Pirates of the Caribbean* and I am reminded of a comic book that both I and our friend Dick Jenssen appreciated as kids, *MIDDY MALONE* also. To see something combining pirates and space adventure had to be a winner. A while back I saw a series set in space, featuring Anthony Quinn as a Long John Silver character with an unlikely lot of "space pirates" and set on an alien planet and that was a bit of fun. Then last month I watched Disney's *TREASURE PLANET* on cable and that was an even more way-out space animated adventure with animal characters.



Voice overs by some leading actors who I regret I have forgotten, added to the enjoyment. I do not usually watch the animated movies on the cable, though occasionally something looks interesting such as Disney's *Atlantis*. A Japanese epic titled *STEAMBOY* was recently reviewed on the TV. This one is set in Victorian England and features a young scientific wizard who invents all these fantastic devices and that looks like a must see. We are also looking forward to seeing the award-winning *TRIPLETS of BELLEVILLE* on DVD shortly.

I have remarked in our other publication, *AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS*, which incidentally is still being published from time to time and we will be happy to send a copy to any readers on request, that a lot of original fantasy has been published in Australia over recent years. Not so much SF in book form, though I have read the Sean Williams and Shane Dix and Megan Lindholm titles from Harper Collins and others from Random House. However it is good to see that SF writers can have their short fiction published in such as *AUREALIS*, *ORB* and *ANDROMEDA SPACEWAYS*. I was given a subscription to the latter as a birthday present. A very nicely produced publication, which I see has now seen fifteen issues.

The Melbourne SF Club's zine *ETHEL THE AARDVARK* has now seen 114 issues, which beats the club old original zine *Etherline* by about ten issues. Thank you people for continuing to send me issues. 114 features an article by Danny Oz about his trips by car to Perth and other interesting observations and *CONTINUUM 2004* reports by Edward McArdle and Bill Wright. With our report of the con in mind it was interesting to see how we all had our own ideas about what was going on and what we thought was interesting. *Continuum 3* by the way is being held July 15-17, 2005 at the Hilton on the Park. Sponsored by Voyager publications and Slow Glass Books and it is great to see Justin Ackroyd of Slow Glass has found himself a new shop after closing down at the old Space Age Books premises and continuing mail order for a while. For details on when it will be open and all get onto www.slowglass.com.au.

Bill Wright's zine *I.R.S.* number 221 is to hand and it is sad to learn that future publication may be curtailed. Where will we get to see the imaginative creations by DITMAR that have graced the covers of IRS for so long? Reading Bill's ANZAPA mailing comments makes me think that I should be a member of ANZAPA myself or some other fanzine mailing group, but I have always been daunted by having to read all the contributions.

Thanks to Murray Moore in Ontario, Canada for sending me his zine *MOZ* which features a report on the last CORFLU fanzine fans convention in Las Vegas. It has no doubt changed a lot there since I spent a couple of nights there after CHICON and flew over the Grand Canyon in 1983, although I do see a bit of it on TV in *CSI* and other shows. It was nice to read the report and see the photos of people I know or have at least been aware of in their writings. Eric and Jean's offer of Airlie Beach would have been nice for the next CORFLU, not that we would have

afforded getting there rather than San Francisco, but it is great that Bruce Gillespie will be a special guest. His zine publishing has been quite phenomenal. It would seem that anybody who has ever published a fanzine has original Bill Rotsler illos and I have a few, plus two name badges that he specially did for me. Bill is a fan institution and we will never forget him.

Thanks to Michael Waite for sending *Locus* and *SF Chronicle* to us via Dick Jenssen. It is much appreciated and enables us to at least keep up with what is being published and what is going on. Thanks to Edwina Harvey for sending us *The Australian SF Bullsheet* which enables us to keep up with what us going on in fandom and the SF world in Australia. Interesting to see the report on William Shatner in the November issue about his song album and his signing up for a "Branson Spaceflight". We noticed him in a recent episode on TV of *The Practice*, in a typical flamboyant role. One of the few things that it is worth having the TV cable is being able to watch many of the episodes of all the *Star Trek* series. We missed a couple of new episodes of *Stargate* which has certainly lifted its game recently, but we expect to catch up with them on cable in time to come. Thanks for giving *Out of the Bin* a mention, Edwina. We will be happy to send copies to anybody who asks.

A new Thomas Covenant book brings back Space Age memories. We ordered, I think, fifty copies of the first book in the series, but apparently that was the total quantity that distributors ordered for the whole of Australia. Their next order I believe was for a few more than that. People were looking for another *Lord of the Rings* but although it was an entirely different style of fantasy it did go down well with a lot of readers whom I am sure will be excited to see a new sequence. Since that time back in the 1970s, fantasy has it seems become a very popular genre, with many titles even being written and published in Australia. But nothing matches LotR in my estimation.

Well it seems our long period of little rain has been broken at last. There has been short periods of rain over night and some days and enough to make everything grow much better than this time last year. But after a violent storm which left a remarkable meter across patch of hailstones on our front lawn earlier in the week, which we discovered when we came home in the evening, we have had last night and today, a lot of rain! The government said that restrictions will remain from now on whatever, but at least things are very good for the gardens and lawns now, meaning more work for me and that good.

We will get another *Out of the Bin* out before Christmas, meanwhile we are working on my memoirs and we will have a revised part one and part two, out early in 2005. In time of course for THYLACON of which I am the Fan GoH, being held now at the Wrest Point Casino Convention Centre, Hobart, Tasmania, 10-13 June, 2005. PO Box 345 Kingston, Tasmania 7051.

M. B.