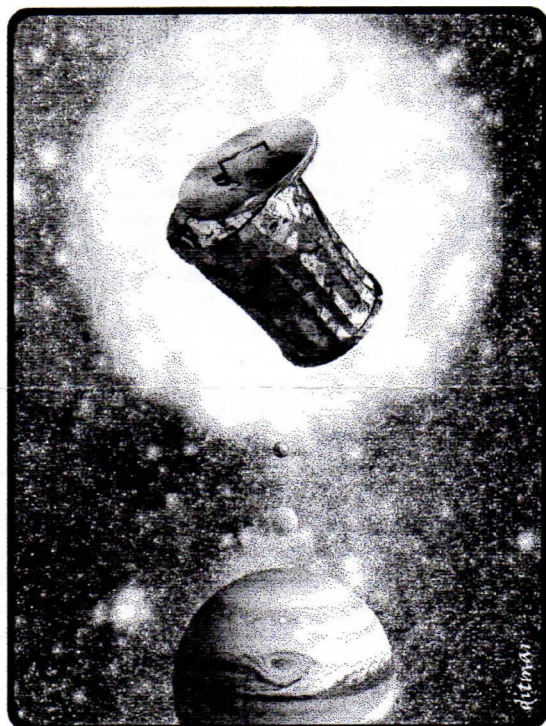


# Out of the Bin



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A Newsletter from MERV BINNS  
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'Space Bin' Artwork by Ditmar

**MUSIC BEHIND THE SCENES** is a series of programs on movie music that have been screened on the ABC's Sunday afternoon session on the arts. I mentioned previously that they had not mentioned my favourite composer of movie music, Enio Morricone. This week's program did cover his music and I was very pleased to get more insight into his work, including the so-called Spaghetti Western movies. He has actually done much more than those movies, having composed soundtracks for over 400 movies. Altogether a very interesting program for a movie music buff like me.

Friend David Clarke has lent us copies of the magazine **CINEFANTASTIQUE**, which Space Age Books was distributing soon after the magazine was first published in the 1970s. It always has been one of the best magazines covering F&SF movies and still is, but reading through the copies David has lent us I have discovered just how much I have missed in movies, let alone TV series that such as channel 9 have spat the dummy on. Most of the movies I will no doubt catch up with, but TV series like *Farscape*, and *Deep Space 9*, will we ever see the rest of those? At least we are seeing *Voyager* which is coming up with some very good episodes.

Right after that we are seeing *The Outer Limits* on channel 7, which is not too bad, and a new fantasy horror series called *Dark Realm* on channel 9 at the same time, started last night. What we saw of that did not impress. Channel 10 had a movie starring *Beauty and the Beast's* lion man Ron Perlman, playing a Ming-like character. A very crude send-up of *Flash Gordon* and other old SF on TV, which was slightly reminiscent of *Flesh Gordon* with a similar premise to *Galaxy Quest*, which it predated by about seven years, but not in the same class. The comic-book style costumes, space ships and sets were fun and almost made *The Adventures of Captain Zoom in Outer Space* worth watching the next day on video. Why do the channels insist on putting all the SF stuff on late at night and at the same time!

Seeing the book listed, the autobiography of the actor the late **Nigel Hawthorne**, reminded me that I have seen the passing of a number of virtual icons in my movie and TV watching life over the past year. It started I think with Harry Secombe, then there was George Harrison, Spike Milligan, Nigel Hawthorne, Ray Walston, Jonathan Harris, who played the nutty Dr Zachary Smith in *Lost in Space* TV series and most recently Richard Harris. Thanks to them all for the enjoyment they gave me over the years.

**HARDINGS:** There have been a number of people throughout my life with the name Harding. When I was only five years old and in first grade at school, I clearly remember clocking a kid I think named Barry Harding, because he was doing something to me and possibly others, that I did not like. I can recall that the teacher was not too upset about it, so I presume he deserved it. My parents and I lived in four houses in Myrtle Grove, Preston, Victoria from the 1930s through to the 1950s. First up with my grandparents in #5, then in #3, then in #7 and last in #4. Reg Harding and family, who were one of a family of crumpet manufacturers, moved into #7 and my parents were employed by them part time. Then when I got into SF fandom I met Lee (Leo) Harding, who has been a friend, colleague and employee of mine in Space Age Books. We have remained friends along with other members of the Melbourne SF group for would you believe fifty years. As a writer Lee had a number of SF novels and short fiction published and won the Children's Book Award for *DISPLACED PERSON*. Now on Harper Collins list I see a lady author named Traci Harding, who is in the forefront of fantasy writing in Australia. No relation to any other Hardings I have known, I do not think.

We have been watching a TV series called '24', starring Donald Sutherland's son Kiefer. The whole day in the life of special agent Jack Bauer and the presidential candidate he was employed to protect, was screened as one hour of the day each episode. His family is subjected to kidnapping and threats of death and there was hardly a minute of non-excitement in the whole thing, but when Bauer's wife is killed in the last episode, what enjoyment we had in the series evaporated. Completely unnecessary, we thought. A DVD was advertised with a blatant mention of an alternate ending but if those clever bastards who made this series think that people are going to rush out and buy the DVD just to see a satisfactory ending, they have another think coming.

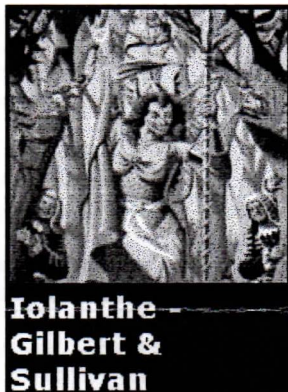
Fate, call it what you will, certainly presents us with some remarkable situations at times. I only discovered that our friend **John Foyster** attended the same primary school as me, in West Preston, but a couple of years apart and we never met till many years later. However that is nothing to his remarkable account of having met a taxi driver in Adelaide who he found had spent a brief spell in the hospital in Fairfield, Melbourne with him in 1956 when they both had polio. Thanks, John, for that account, and good luck with your chemotherapy treatments.

A few years ago now I used to travel into the city of Melbourne by train from Preston and get off the train at Princes Bridge Station. Following the building of the underground station's Princes Bridge Station was no more and all trains ran from the adjoining Flinders Street Station. The rail yards which led most of the trains into these stations, were always regarded as a blot on the landscape and

should be built over. Well this has been partly done and numerous constructions adjoining have also taken place over the last ten to twenty years. My late parents would not know where they were if dropped off in Melbourne City now. Some rather ugly and bizarre buildings have been constructed directly over what used to be Princes Bridge Station. I do not know how to begin to describe them, but abstract art translated into buildings, especially from the outside, though a little more practical inside might be a fair description. Part of the complex is a home for SBS TV channel, but the interest to the Melbourne public and visitors is the Victorian National Art Gallery is now housed there and Helena and I visited that in particular. The labyrinthine design of the areas displaying the art is really good, with superb lighting to suit each style of painting. The paintings on show when we visited, which was soon after the opening of the new gallery, were largely 19<sup>th</sup> century landscapes and portraits by such as McCubbin and Streeton, but there was a selection of paintings ranging right through up to recent times. My favourite artist, Norman Lindsay, was represented by one painting, which was in his inimitable style and I was pleased to see, as it was not one I had seen on display or in the books. One modern sculpture was part car and part organic monster, looking like a matter transmission gone wrong. We loved that. The main aim of this opening was no doubt to show the great work of the early period in Victorian history, including the famous Heidelberg School artists works and no doubt other periods and styles will be displayed more fully in due course. Altogether the buildings of Federation Square, as the area opposite St Paul's Cathedral, on the corner of Flinders Street and Swanston Street is now called, is very eye-catching and interesting, but a little to way out for my tastes. I am inclined to put it all in the same basket as most things in this age of the throw away society, and in a few years, the next century at least, it will all be pulled down and something entirely different put up. The old Exhibition Building for instance has style, but unfortunately it will no doubt become too expensive to keep in good order and it will go.

#### GILBERT & SULLIVAN'S IOLANTHE

I got to see IOLANTHE with theatre critic friend Peter Kemp a bit sooner than I expected, with a performance staged by the Australian Opera Company at the State Theatre in Melbourne. It was my first visit to this theatre, which was a pleasure I had long awaited. It is a very impressive complex in a relatively modern style, but the main theatre, where the performance took place, was a little too modern for me. The acoustically designed architecture did not appeal to me and once again my traditionalism turns me more to the style of the Princess Theatre. I am looking forward now to seeing the interior of the renovated Regent Theatre. However I hope that I do attend the State again and I would like to attend an orchestral concert at there in due course.



Getting back to IOLANTHE. I enjoyed it very much. It is not fair to compare it with the production of *Merrie England* which Peter took me to at Monash University, put on by the Victorian G&S Society, but I will. The latter was very good, but as might be expected *Iolanthe* was a bit more sumptuous, with beautiful costumes and staging. The scenario was as to be expected great fun and especially not having experienced it before. Fairies mixed up with the Lords of the Land and Parliament after all must lead to a highly hilarious plot. The fairies flying about, and the Lords in their spectacular robes marching about the stage, were two aspects that particularly impressed. The singing, as might be expected from the country's leading opera company was superb.

The performers were all good, but one man, Dennis Olsen, who has apparently been performing G&S for maybe forty years, was the absolute epitome of the "elderly gentleman" character. The song leading to the finale, with him in his black, gold trimmed robes of office as the Lord High Chancellor, accompanied by two Lords in their grey suits, dancing across the stage arm in arm, was quite incongruous and was probably the highlight of the show. I loved every bit of it and I am certainly looking forward to seeing more G&S with Peter if the opportunity presents itself.

Our American fan friend Michael Waite has sent us another issue of his zine *TRIAL AND AIR*, November, #12. He sends them in a heavy envelope plastered with a great range of stamps, which we really do appreciate. It is nice to see the covers of all the old SF fanzines. I did not know that so many parodies of *Alice In Wonderland* had been done. My favourite edition of the original is the one with the illustrations by Tenniel. Three movies have been made, according to Maltin, but another one was done relatively recently with Whoopie Goldberg in the cast, which I did not like. There was a musical version made in 1972 with a great cast including Michael Crawford, Peter Sellers and other well-known actors. Maltin did not appreciate it, but I loved it and I have often played the soundtrack recording. As a bookseller and as a fan attending conventions also I guess, I had the opportunity to meet many authors and count some as personal friends, but I never took it for granted and always looked at it as a privilege. After nearly 25 years as bookseller and fan I had met very few, but at TORCON in 1973 I saw and spoke to and was introduced to most of the idols of my SF reading life. But I deviate! Your trip to see Stephen King reminded me of all the book signings I held at my shop Space Age Books. Some were great, such as Anne McCaffrey with fans queued up half way around the block, true, to get copies of the newly released *WHITE DRAGON* and all, but others, whom I will not mention, were disasters. I have only read a couple of Stephen King's novels, but I have seen about ten movies, my favourites being *Christine*, *The Dead Zone* and probably *The Green Mile*, but that leaves a lot not seen. Most I would give a miss, as I am not really a horror story or movie fan. I do want to see some though, especially *Hearts in Atlantis*. As for his "Horror Quiz" I was able to pick about half with some prompting from Ditar, but not all of the titles included I would regard as horror stories. Yes, there have been many more made since 1981. The splatter movies such as *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* I would not watch in a fit, but things like *Alien* and other SF horror and what I would call thrillers, like the *Mothman Prophecies* I have seen and appreciated. I liked *Blade* and *Interview With A Vampire* - Anne Rice has certainly created a marvellous world for her stories - and I am sure there are others I cannot recall. I watched the new version of *The Haunting* which like a lot of other current horror stuff was crap, but the original, along with *The Uninvited*, I consider two of the best ever. The Hammer Film movies were fun and so were the old Karloff and Lugosi stuff, but the new things are, spectacular SFX or not, too nasty. One of my top ten worst films "ever" is *Night of the Living Dead*. Crap with a capital C! Trying to remember the rest of the ten would take a bit of research, after all, they are all forgettable, but recently seen *Pulp Fiction* is well up on my "movies to hate" list. Like a lot of other good SF I should have read I did not read all of Lloyd Biggle's novels, which went with more than half my collection when cash was needed. If I live another 68 years I may read all the books I have, let alone the titles I should have read that I do not have now. Nice little quote from Kipling. I bet a lot of other authors can echo that sentiment. Your letter column has some interesting comments from other readers, and I wish I could comment more but that's it for this issue.

*Wishing you all the compliments of the season!*

*A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*

MERV and HELENA