

The Rubbish Bin(ns)

Number 7

March 2000

A personal zine produced by **Merv Binns**
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THE JURASSIC PARK OF MELBOURNE FANDOM

Ghosts of Fandom Past, from the '50s and '60s: *John Foyster, Mervyn Barrett, Bill Wright, Cedric Rowley, Bruce Gillespie, John Straede, Tony Thomas, Cheryl Straede, Leigh Edmonds, Dick Jenssen, Robin Johnson, Roman Mazurak, Helena Roberts Binns, Merv Binns*, at Aussiecon 3 FanHistoricon

EDITORIAL: THE NEW MILLENNIUM

AUSSIECON THREE REPORT

THE RUBBISH BIN(NS)

#7 March 2000

MILLENNIUM

RUBBISH BIN(NS) is produced purely for my own edification and as a way of keeping in touch with friends. No subscriptions, but your zines in exchange, letters of comment, or any old sf and f books or magazines that you don't want any more, that I can add to my 'for sale' lists, will be gratefully appreciated.

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

Well, here we are in the twenty-first century, and personally it feels somewhat anti-climactic. In the nineteen-sixties I thought life had passed me by, and then I got a new lease of life when I opened Space Age Books, and at the beginning I thought at least my financial security was safe, although my personal life was all wrapped up with the bookshop and science fiction fandom, as it had always been. I wondered if I would even reach the ripe old age of sixty and if I still would be selling books when I was seventy, let alone survive even until the twenty-first century. I thought that I would probably have money and a home but no one to share it with. How wrong can you be!

Here I am, sixty-five, no money, living in a rented home, still selling a few books but I have the most important thing of all, someone to share my life with, my love, my wife Helena - someone who shares my passions in sf, books in general, movies and so many other things, and friends we both have known for many years. Some we shared the new millennium celebrations with, as we have been sharing the New Year's evenings with for quite a few years now. I have been having these get-togethers since about 1975 and it has become a sort of tradition. It has been an ideal time to get the barbecue out and enjoy a few drinks and good food with our friends as we did again this year, except that this year we started out at home and then went to the Caulfield Tabaret about nine-thirty and enjoyed the celebrations with the crowd. When Helena and I got home about two in the morning, we turned on the TV and watched the celebrations on Channel Two, who did a fantastic job of presenting places all over the world as the time zones rolled along, and how they were welcoming the new millennium. We stuck it out until about four AM, then turned the video on. Later that afternoon, the first day of the new era, we watched the video recording of the later celebrations and the earlier ones, which we recorded when we were out at the Tabaret.



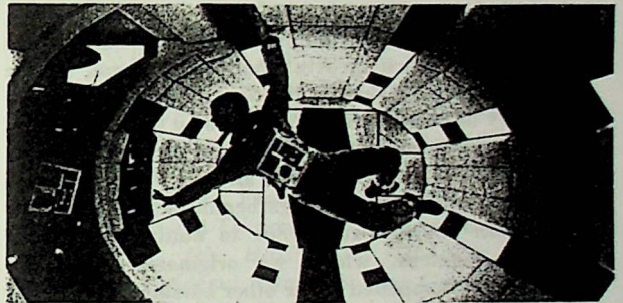
Despite all the dire warnings of disasters, with computers going crazy and the world coming to an end, the most significant thing that happened was the way people all over the world came together, via the medium of television, to share their celebrations with each other. The fireworks in Sydney on the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House were only matched, going by what we saw, by the Eiffel Tower in Paris, but London and Beijing were also very spectacular and of course the crowd in Times Square, New York was great. Every group seen by the TV cameras that were beaming the scenes all over the Earth, did their own thing, with native dancing, singing and various displays, but the most beautiful of all was the coverage of New Zealand at dawn on the first day of the New Millennium. Dame Kiri Ti Kanawa sang traditional Maori songs, then the cameras panned from the stage set up close to the ocean, to offshore where two sailing boats and a maori outrigger were moored, while a traditional long canoe type boat was being rowed ashore by warriors in their traditional costumes. The whole scene looked like a painting from the Victorian era or earlier. Simply breathtaking. There were numerous wonderful scenes of people and places, but the one that did stand out was the opening of the Millennium Dome in London, a sort of updated version of the great dome of the Albert Hall, which we see regularly on the ABC TV in the London Proms presentations. The crowd scene there in the new dome was matched only by the one in Times Square. All in all a day of spectacular visions that will remain in our memories and remind us that we are living in a new century and a new world that has gradually enveloped us.

Helena and I have always battled to keep up with this new world, but we are managing now with two old computers, ancient TV sets in almost every room and two antique video recorders, all of which could self-destruct at any time.

Meanwhile we now have a modem and we hope to be on the computer net, if and when we can afford it. We are impressed by the big screen TVs, and shelves full of video disc movies and cassettes and computers with enormous capacity, that we see at our friends' places, but we are very thankful for what we have and very grateful for the help that friends have given us to get hold of what we do have. Visual images, pretty or spectacular pictures, are the order of the day everywhere we look today. TV commercial producers were the first to make use of many of the innovative techniques that computer graphics provided. The movie business has burgeoned and there seems to be a race between film makers as to who can produce the most mindblowing scenes of explosions, car crashes and science fiction and fantasy worlds that we only imagined in our dreams. Most of this has come about because of the things they can do with computer imaging and some of the movies we have seen recently illustrate this.

Just last week we finally caught up with the Australian made sf film *DARK CITY*, on video, and there is a prime example along with another Aussie made film *MATRIX*, of the special visual effects art. Anything is possible now on the screen and movies like these could not have been made a few years ago. We are looking forward eagerly to the new version of *The Lord of the Rings*, being made in New Zealand, with even TV's *XENA*, which is produced in Kiwiland, giving some indication as to what can be done with SFX now. BUT it is unfortunate that visual effects are in many cases all a movie has going for it. *LOST IN SPACE* was an absolute disaster story wise. We saw *END OF DAYS* a couple of days before the New Year - incidentally the exact time period in which the events in the film are supposed to take place - and what a load of rubbish it is; spectacular, yes, with the Dark Angel, having taken human form, endeavouring to impose his will on the population of New York and on Arnold Schwarzenegger in particular, by burning and wrecking much of the city. It has a bit of *ROSEMARY'S BABY*, *THE OMEN*, *TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER* and probably other movies I have forgotten, not to forget tales such as James Blish's *BLACK EASTER*, except that in this case The Devil has chosen the New Millennium for the conception of his son. Visually very spectacular with the earth lifting, people and things being thrown all over the place and "great balls of fire" rolling about consuming everything in their path. *DARK CITY* has a lot of great dark and sombre but spectacular imagery (Helena says it's *film noir* in colour) and as in some other movies I have seen recently such as the new *Star Wars* epic, I would like to see it again just to take in the scenery in the background. The final shot of the city in space immediately made me think of James Blish's *Cities in Flight* series.

The Robin Williams movie *WHAT DREAMS MAY COME*, based very loosely on the Richard Matheson novel is another recent example of breathtaking movie scenic art, which I can heartily recommend simply for the visual aspects. Williams' latest film is also good, and not only for the background scenes. There are some great shots of a future San Francisco, not to mention some impressive interior scenes, but the make-up, robot costume and one scene from *BICENTENNIAL MAN*, with all these body parts hanging on the wall, so to speak, is just wonderful. We have seen some superb artwork by sf artists, such as Michael Whelan and Jim Burns for instance, and the look of this movie reminds me of this kind of art and creates an atmosphere that I am sure most sf fans will be very pleased with. The story seems to stick to the original Asimov tale more or less, and Robin Williams does a great job as Andrew Martin, a robot who dreams of becoming a real man. Some people say that he is always "Robin Williams" in his roles, but I totally disagree and the great diversity of the roles he has played from *POPEYE*, the grown-up Peter Pan in *HOOK*, and *JUMANJI*, to *MRS DOUBTFIRE* and his parts in *DEAD POET'S SOCIETY* or *WHAT DREAMS MAY COME*, tells me that he is one of the great movie scene stealers of all time.



What else have we seen or heard of interest recently? A short time ago, I think prior to director Stanley Kubrick's demise last year, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the release of *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* passed, and to celebrate the event a group of people got together to talk and reminisce about the movie. The two stars of the film Keir Dullea and Gary Lockwood, astronaut Bill Anders, actor Tom Hanks, physics professor and author Lawrence Krauss and others were on a panel, while Arthur C. Clarke was appropriately on TV satellite link-up. It was a fascinating insight into the making of the film, the experiences of the people involved and how the movie stands up by today's standards. Not only was it a milestone in movie making, it had a profound influence on the making of sf films, and the movies in general, to this day.

Radio station 88.3 Southern FM's *The Space Show*, presented by Andrew Rennie and Alan Walker of the *Space Association of Australia*, broadcast the 2001 celebration on their programme last year. *The Space Show* can be heard at 7.00 PM each Wednesday evening in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Their schedule includes reports on current satellite launchings, and other space programme events, items on astronomy and related topics such as science fiction movies and so forth. During the summer season they were running a *Star Trek* audio, narrated by George Takei ('Mr Sulu'), taken from the novel *ENTERPRISE: THE FIRST ADVENTURE*. *The Space Show* told their listeners to watch for the International Space Station tonight, Sunday January 16th 2000, and we got a very clear view of it passing directly over our heads. Incidentally we have seen *MIR* one evening and I did actually see *SPUTNIK* when it was launched way, way back in 1957.

When it comes to documentary items on TV, SBS screened a programme titled *THE TIME LORDS*. No, it had nothing to do with *Dr Who*, but discussed the concept of time travel, with current scientific theories and ideas on the subject presented by the world's leading physicists. While some allowed for the theoretical possibility of time travel, the consensus of opinion was that in practice it was unlikely. Incidentally, I have a copy of an *Australian* newspaper poster claiming "Hawking Backs Time Travel", which proves that you cannot believe everything you read in the newspapers. We watched a very interesting three part doco on the ABC, which the fundamentalists would have been up in arms about. Piecing together all the evidence that archaeologists have now gathered, the makers of *The Human Journey* endeavour to outline the rise of homo sapiens, where we originated and what probably happened to the other hominids our species outlasted along the way. Over the years I have followed the discoveries they have made, having always devoutly believed in the Darwinian premise that humans had descended from apes, and I have lapped up every bit of evidence supporting this that I have seen reported. So it was great to see all the bits and pieces put together in a most enlightening way.

We are still years behind with of course the *Star Trek* TV series, but perhaps we will live long enough to see all the episodes on free-to-air TV channel 9, rather than cable or video, that have been released in the USA, of *DEEP SPACE NINE* and *VOYAGER*. Meanwhile we have seen the last episode of *CRUSADE*, leaving some questions unanswered of course, as we did with *BABYLON 5*. At least with B5 there are some books being published, according to what producer Michael Straczynski told us at AUSSIECON 3, in that he had written a number of

outlines for novels which will answer most of the questions about what happened to the characters after B5 was destroyed. So far we have seen the third in a trilogy about the PSI Corps. No news yet on a new series Straczynski is working on. Meanwhile a new sf series produced in Australia has been advertised recently, and it really 'looks' good, which is not surprising since the production of such movies as *DARK CITY* have taken place here. Little may be said about other so called sci-fi series on TV. It seems that anything to do with from time travel to vampires can be called sci-fi by TV channels here. Ho hum!

UPDATE:

I typed up the previous part of this editorial in January, but various things have delayed us getting it finished until now. Helena and I now have two computers. Our old one is still giving me a chance to learn how to operate a computer; the new one is a little more sophisticated but Helena, who is a lot cleverer at using the computers than me and has been taking lessons from our friend Dick Janssen, has been helping me get the hang of it. I am still screwing things up periodically and Helena, with more than a little advice from Dick, is editing, formatting and fixing up other details for me. But I will get there! The second computer originally belonged to Elaine and Bruce Gillespie, who then passed it on to Lucy Sussex and Julian Warner, who have now passed it on to us with a modem and all, and we simply have to thank everybody, but especially Lucy and Julian, and Dick for putting us in touch with them. Dick has also very kindly provided us with a printer to upgrade from the one given us by our friend and customer Craig Wyton. We are now able to print out our own letters and original copy for *THE RUBBISH BIN(NS)* etc., and to stop plaguing Dick to do it for us. We are still trying to make up our minds what service provider to get onto, and if anybody has any suggestions we would appreciate your advice.

We got together with some old friends on the 17th of February to celebrate Valma Brown's 50th birthday. Dr Leigh Edmonds, PHD, and Valma after spending a few years in Perth, are now living in Ballarat where Leigh has obtained a position. It was great to see them both again and a few other friends whom we do not see too often.

Well, we have survived the transition into the new millennium, but if you take notice of all these things you see on TV about orbiting lumps of rock, volcanic eruptions, global warming and lots of other potential disasters, you wonder that the human race has survived as long as it has.

Not that it is a very long time in a cosmic sense. The scientists seem to be coming up with more astounding theories about the origin of the universe and they talk in billions or more years. The sf writers, as always, have latched onto the scientists' pronouncements, and many of the stories now being published deal with cosmic events on a vast scale. I have just read a trilogy by David Brin set in the *Uplift* universe in which many of his books have taken place. It started out on an interesting world, which humans and aliens share relatively peacefully and by the third book I was waiting for the nasty aliens to be dealt with, with so that life on the world, called Jijo, can go back to normal, but instead I found the action moving into the vast reaches of space, with whole worlds being destroyed and the complete destruction of life in the universe a distinct possibility. Even so, I did enjoy this *New Uplift Trilogy*.

Of course sf writers do latch on to new scientific concepts, which is why we often see more than one new title using similar ideas, and the threat of a collision with a wandering piece of space rock is a case in point. When an astronomer warned of the close approach of such an object a few years ago, at least three sf books resulted and when the subject came up again more recently we saw two movies. Incidentally, our federal government refuses to fund astronomers in Australia who believe that we also, besides other parts of our planet, should be keeping watch for any threatening space objects, so it must be handled as usual by the amateurs. It is beside the point that so called amateurs have in the past contributed a lot to astronomical discoveries. Getting back to sf, cosmic cataclysms or tremendous journeys through time are not new in sf books, but with authors like Stephen Baxter, Peter Hamilton and others, *big* in sf writing is taking on a whole new meaning.

Nobody lives forever, we know, but if you believe the pronouncements on Channel 9's *SIXTY MINUTES* program last month, life expectancy has already increased and current experiments indicate that we can look forward to much longer lives in the future. Genetic manipulation and other new discoveries indicate indefinite life spans, so *Sixty Minutes* said. Other scientific advances talked about in the program pointed to a very different world this century, many things way beyond what sf writers have indicated, and others spot on. Hugo Gernsback's tale published around 1930, *124C41+*, predicted many things we now take for granted, but in lots of other cases sf writers have missed the bus, because the advances made in some quarters are way beyond or quite different, to what we all would have expected.

The emphasis of SF today, though, is not primarily on prediction and I do not think, apart from Gernsback and a few others, it ever was. Initially like all other pulp fiction it was meant to entertain, and although many readers and critics are looking for stronger literary values in sf writing now, entertainment is still the name of the game for most of us.

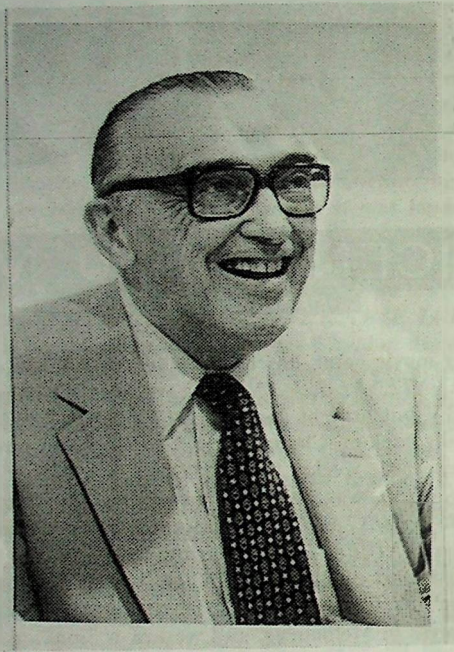


BICENTENNIAL MAN

STARRING ROBIN WILLIAMS

Our movie going has been rather quiet since seeing *BICENTENNIAL MAN*. We have been watching lots of TV but little of note. *ST DEEP SPACE NINE* is finally back on Channel 9. *APOLLO 13* was screened again last week: Bruce Willis in *THE FIFTH ELEMENT* was also shown recently, and *Star Trek FIRST CONTACT*. The astronomical documentary series *UNIVERSE* is still running, with the final, fourth part due on the ABC on March 1st. Stephen King's *THE GREEN MILE* is currently screening in theatres in Melbourne, and we saw a "making of" it on TV last week, which included a couple of brief comments by King. Fantasy and horror is big with movie makers and TV producers at the moment, with the *HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL* in which Australia's Academy Award Winner Geoffrey Rush plays a Vincent Price like character. Bruce Willis in *THE SIXTH SENSE* is still running. Meanwhile on TV we have such epics as *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*, *ANGEL* (*Buffy* spinoff), and *CHARMED* filling the teen psychic come horror slots. While the downgraded continuation of *SLIDERS* was soon pulled, *STARGATE* continues on its sometimes innovative way, and *SEVEN DAYS* plods on like a bad attack of *deja vu*, its most recent episode latching onto the current UFO/Roswell obsession, following the repeat of a movie titled *ROSWELL*, starring Martin Sheen and Kyle (Dune/Twin Peaks) MacLachlan. We even have a series now about Roswell, featuring a human looking alien with super "powers" yet. All in all not very much to offer in visual sf and f at the moment, although *THE GREEN MILE* might be worth a look see.

One of the most innovative sf authors in the field, when I started reading sf and for many years later, was A.E.VAN VOGT, who I regret to tell you died recently. His classic tales *THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER*, *WEAPON MAKERS*, *THE WORLD OF NULL A* and many other titles over the years, gave sf readers tremendous enjoyment. GIL KANE, who was a comic strip artist of great note for many years, also passed away recently.



A.E. VAN VOGT (Photo by Rick Hawes)

LETTERS & FANZINES RECEIVED

The late Frank Bryning's daughter Carol Walmsley wrote and thanked me for sending the last RB with the tribute to her father and added:

"He lived a long and fulfilling life, and although the last three years were spent in the cruel and hazy world of Dementia, his passing was, thankfully, easy.

May we wish you and all of Dad's SF friends all the best for 2000 and beyond."

Paul Anderson wrote from Grange, South Australia. He was a very active fan in the past but is now a family man and church goer, which takes up most of his time. He is still in touch with other fans including Paul Day and the late Alan Bray's widow Lesley. In response to my comments last issue about Australia becoming a republic, he says that he is disenchanted with the Queen and the way she has handled her family affairs. "As such I am a republican through lack of a credible alternative", he said.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK

No. 86 August 1999



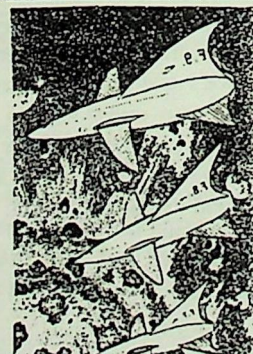
Thanks to David Russell I now know the origin of the Melbourne Sf Club's zine *ETHEL THE AARDVARK*. Nobody in the club bothered to tell me, or anybody who does read my zines did not know at any rate. It comes from a sequence in the *Monty Python* series, in which John Cleese is a bookseller who contends with a very annoying customer, who does not really want to buy a book at all and keeps asking for titles that do not exist. (Boy can I sympathise with that!) Finally they come up with a title and Cleese begins to relate the story, as the scene closes, and you can guess the title of the book. The latest issue *ETHEL*, #89, is to hand. I might add, and I appreciate the consistent quality of the club zine, with details about MSFC activities, book reviews, and more, bringing to mind the club's old zine *ETHERLINE*, which other club members and I produced in the 1950s through early '60s. It covered basically the same information and was the best that 'duplicating' could do at that time, but that is where the comparison ends.

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CONVENTION
FEATURING...

ISSUE

1956



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ISSUE No. 79

A letter from one of my earliest contacts in fandom, Bob Smith, made me very pleased that my efforts in endeavouring to record my memories of sf fandom here is appreciated. I sent Bob a very old photo I had found of him, with friends, including Merv Barrett who contacted him just after AUSSIECON 3 as it happened. He pointed that Marion Zimmer Bradley was the same age as himself and that he was not aware of her passing or Walt Willis, and John Foyster reminded him that only John Berry remains from a very famous group of fans now, in Ireland. My zine and photos in particular certainly struck a chord for Bob, who finally added : "I will sincerely treasure your fanzine, Merv." That really does make my efforts all worthwhile.

Another old friend I mentioned in *Friends* was Ross Cozens, who has now been living in the USA for about thirty years. Ross has for a few years now been going on some wonderful trips, first on the American continent and then farther afield, and he has been sending great letters to me, round about Christmas time, describing his travel adventures. His latest was to Iran and with his permission I will reprint the part of his latest letter describing his experiences there, in the next issue of RB.

Eric Lindsay is a Sydney or at least New South Wales fan, who will be well known to many other fans here and overseas, having attended the World Sf Convention, *Torcon* with me and other *Aussiecon 1* delegates in 1973 and made a number of other trips to overseas gatherings since, and he has been producing his zine *Genenschein* for more years than I bet he wants to remember. Also for a few years now he and Jean Weber, who with her *Weber Woman's Wrevenge* is also well known in fandom, were living in the Blue Mountains, not far from the home of my favourite artist of all time Norman Lindsay. (Not a relative I believe.) Last year they moved up North to Airlie Beach, Queensland and as if that move was not enough, they now plan to travel around the Australian continent in their newly acquired motorhome. It was very aptly described in a recent circular letter we received. Photo of the motorhome and Eric herewith.

By the way, we were wondering what had happened to Jan Howard Finder since we saw him again at the Worldcon and he told us he was going on an around-Australia junket. We thought maybe the dingoes had got the Wombat! But on March 10th we were reassured when we received a letter from him, safe and sound back at his home in the States. His trip report is available at <<http://www.klink.net/fcs/sfra2001.html>>

Talking about fanzines, I have to thank Marc Ortlieb for regularly sending me his *Australian SF Bullsheet*, which reports all the latest news about sf writers, publications, clubs, events and more, and which is also available by e-mail (and I hope to provide Marc with our e-mail address, SOON!) Bruce Gillespie's report on *AUSSIECON 3* arrived and it is, as you may expect from Bruce, a very comprehensive coverage. The subtitle, *A Feast of Fans*, certainly summed up the con for me also, and you will find my much more abbreviated writeup on *AUSSIECON 3* later in this issue of *RB*. Recently Bill Wright handed me a copy of the February issue of his *ANZAPA zine Interstellar Ramjet Scoop*. It includes a complete Nova Mob talk, given by academic Chris Palmer last October '99, about the sf of Philip K. Dick, the usual funny bits that Bill digs up, mailing comments and more, including a copy of a newspaper clipping featuring an article about a young Melbourne University graduate working on the famous CSIRAC computer in 1956. This earnest young meteorologist was Dick Jenssen, alias 'Ditmar', also responsible for another splendid computer generated illustration on the cover of this issue of *IRS*.



Eric Lindsay and Jean Weber



Eric with their motor home

PERHAPS

SCIENTIFCTION REVIEW

Number 3

January, 1954



IN DEFENCE OF THE FLUSH FILE ... by H.L. Campbell

Original scraperboard cover art by Dick Jenssen for *PERHAPS* Number 3, January 1954

Following my reference to Bert Chandler in my *Friends* article last issue, Don Tuck told me that he may have been the first contact that Bert, or Jack as he liked to be called, had with fans in Australia. In fact Don had a phone call from him when he was in port in Hobart, as first mate on an apple ship, on Don's wedding day in 1954. "Gee time flies" said Don. I know that Bob McCubbin corresponded with Bert before they met, some time in the early '50s also, and I have an undated clipping of the event.



Mr. Bertram Chandler (seated), with Mr. Robert J. McCubbin, chairman of the Melbourne Science Fiction

INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP



THE JOURNAL FOR INQUISITIVE READER

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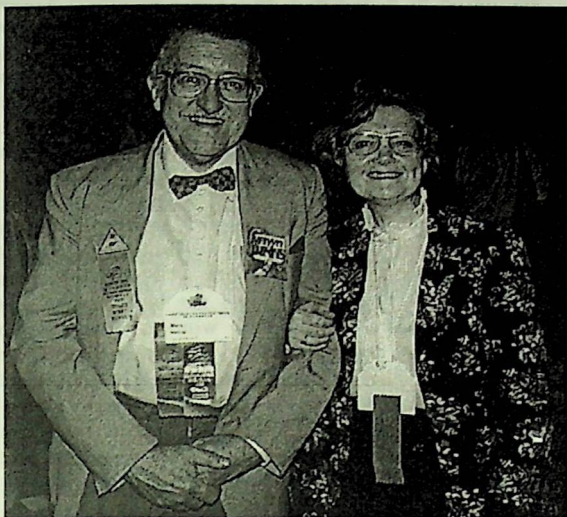
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Computer generated cover illustration by Dr Dick Jenssen for *INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP* #195, June 2000.

An American fan, Michael Waite, to whom I have been passing on a lot of my old zines and with whom I been corresponding with a lot of the time by e-mail. (with Dick Jenssen's assistance), has sent me his zine *TRIAL AND AIR*. Michael has just recently joined the American fanzine group FAPA, with its 250th mailing, and his zine *TRIAL AND AIR* is his first contribution. In it he outlines his interests including reading sf and other literature and collecting books, wandering through new and used bookstores, and there is nothing like a collector describing his pleasure at finding a volume he has been searching for. My friend Keith Curtis comes to mind. Michael noted that a report in *LOCUS* stated that subscriptions to the sf magazines are falling, which no doubt is to be regretted. There are more sf and fantasy books being written and published than ever before, but there is still place for the magazines for sure. Michael also pays tribute to a fan whom even I have heard of, Mae Strelkov, who regrettably passed away on January 27th. He received one letter from her just before she had a stroke, and so inevitably never had the pleasure of receiving any replies to his letters to her. Good luck Michael on joining FAPA. The computer revolution has given us all the means to express ourselves, and power to us all!

Merv B



Merv and Helena Binns at AUSSIECON 3
(Photo by a Canadian fan)

AUSSIECON THREE REPORT

Dear Readers,

The first science fiction convention I attended was held forty three years ago and I have attended many more since, including six World Cons, so I was eagerly looking forward to that sixth one being held last week in Melbourne, September 2nd to the 6th. I was looking forward to meeting old friends from other parts of Australia, New Zealand, England and the USA. I will admit that I have been saying for some years now that meeting people is the best part of attending cons, but it is nice to enjoy some of the program as well, however I was a little disappointed at AUSSIECON THREE.

Why, you may ask. Well, I did get to meet many old friends from all over, many I will probably never have the opportunity to see again, although I hope to keep in touch a bit more through my zines or eventually on the internet. A number of panels were held during the con as the Historicon Program, which I assume was intended to convey to new fans and visitors from overseas, how fandom in Australia and Melbourne in particular came into being and developed. That was great! Trying to remember who did what and when and cheerfully disagreeing on it all with friends of forty years in some cases, was great fun, but very few people other than our own friends and partners made up the audience, besides which we were missing some of the best program items which were on at the same time as our panels.

That also explained why we had such limited audiences at any rate. But don't get me wrong, it was great, and I do hope we can do it again. Meanwhile John Foyster has already produced a booklet detailing some of our early fan history, with more to come from him, myself and others.

I fully realise, having been involved in running conventions, how difficult it is to put a program together and endeavour to satisfy all attendees, but it was extremely disappointing not being able to get to the panels with authors and others discussing their writing and other things, while other items with a limited interest, in my opinion, were easy to get to. The daily update sheets helped us to cope with the numerous program changes, but as some wit remarked, the *POCKET PROGRAM BOOK* should have won the Hugo for the Best Work of Fiction. I certainly heard a lot about *BABYLON 5*, which Helena and I were very interested in, and a lot of fun stuff about that and other TV and movie sf&f. I think this was because the media panels were not programmed against our *HISTORICON* panels, while the author panels were. At any rate, our questions about B5, and Londo in particular, were at least partly answered. It was surprising that none of the nominees for the Best Dramatic Presentation, apart from the "Sleeping In Light" *Babylon Five* episode, were screened, and even that, I believe, was shown only because the con guest, producer of *B5*, J. Michael Straczynski arranged it. He did tell us that he has written and sold to the publishers three books about the Centauri world and we will have to read those to find out about Londo. A new venture saw the making of five episodes of a series, but due to problems with the network, the project was cancelled., though another new series, details secret at this time, is in view. I did not get to see any videos or films during the con and I do not really know what I missed.

The highlights of any con are the Guests of Honors speeches. GREGORY BENFORD the American college professor, physicist and sf author, gave a very interesting 'lecture' on how he became involved with a government think tank on the storage of long term radioactive waste. It was a quite enlightening talk and clearly indicated the broader view about such problems that an sf 'fan' can bring to them. I unfortunately could not get to any of the panels that Dr Benford took part in, but I *would* have liked to have heard him talk about his science fiction writing. Unbelievable! When I was selling books at cons ok, that was it, but even then I could usually get someone to look after my table while I dashed out to see a panel of major interest. Here I am at this con, free as a bird so to speak and I saw less of what I wanted to see than at the previous AUSSIECONS.

Sorry to be harping on this, but you can appreciate how upset I was, seeing that it may well be my last ever world con.

Fan GoH BRUCE GILLESPIE's speech was mainly about why other Melbourne fans deserved to be GoH ahead of him, but we all know that the incredible body of work in his fanzine producing capacity alone made him a very worthy guest of the con. Bruce very passionately spoke about the other fans whom he said should have been GoH, including me, citing my persistence in keeping the Melbourne SF Club going through the twenty years up to 1970, when Space Age Books took over all my time. Being a very sentimental character, I was extremely touched by Bruce's outpourings about me and I unashamedly admit that it brought tears to my eyes. If this con had a highlight for me, Bruce's speech would have to be it.

The lowlight or at least very disappointing event of the con was the Masquerade. All told only about a dozen people took part, which was a disaster only partly saved by the antics of presenters Danny Heap and Nick Stathopoulos. There were some outstanding costumes created by Robert Jan, "Best in Show" and Gail Adams, "Best in Category" and one depicting Queen Amidala of Naboo and her handmaiden from the new *Star Wars* movie, by Trish Ostwald and Lynette Mayer, judged "Best Costume", plus a few other reasonably good efforts. But without the young kids having a go, I doubt that there were more than ten other entrants. Over the years helping to run cons in Melbourne, I was always endeavouring to encourage people to come in costume to the masquerade or whatever you like to call this event, but until the 1970s when the University sf clubs cons started, very few people did. When the costume makers such as Lewis Morley, Nick Stathopoulos and Robert Jan, to name the major ones, got going along with the SCA, we saw some great costumes, with many others at least having a go. Even AUSSIECON ONE had a better turn up than THREE.

I have heard all sorts of excuses, which do not explain why there was such a good turn up for AUSSIECON 2 and many of the local cons over recent years and not just the STAR TREK or other media conventions with all the TREK and STAR WARS rigouts around. Were people put off by the rules of entry, because there were at least another dozen people in the audience at AUSSIECON3 in costumes, that we would have all liked to see parade down the catwalk. Did other costume making fans not attend the con because of the cost of membership or were other attendees afraid to enter because they could not prepare costumes that they thought would meet the

standards of a World Con? The Costumers Guild refused to be involved, we were told, but they were in a recent MULTIVERSE con at least. I for one do want to *know* why this costume parade was such a disappointment, not quite a disaster, and if we *ever* get to hold another big con in Melbourne, let alone a World Con, I hope we will have the costume parade that a world con merits.

Running such a big event as this makes it almost inevitable that some things will get fouled up. I can't recall any obvious problems with AUSSIECON One or Two but I can only guess the law of averages struck this time. The DUFF winner, Janice Gelb from the USA, was co-opted as Programs Operation as Chief on her arrival, most likely because of previous experience at home. Chairman Perry Middlemiss told us that they were still working out the program on the Monday before the con and under the circumstances, with guest J. Michael Straczynski's late arrival due to plane delays and the Japanese Special Guest Hideaki Anno, who was an integral part of the Anime program getting injured and being unable to attend at all, you would have to admit that it must have been a real nightmare for the con-com. I would have liked to have seen more sf panels on the program. Unfortunately for us, things got jammed up in a way that made it impossible for us to get to many of the panels we particularly wanted to see.

The Hugo Awards ceremony was very well orchestrated by Michael Jordan. It was marked by the Fan Artist Award going to the late Ian Gunn and Greg Egan's Best Novella Hugo for his story "Oceanic", which were the first ever fan and fiction Hugos won by Australians. Our other half, *THYME* edited by Alan Stewart, was nominated for a Hugo, but once again the winner was Dave Langford's *ANSIBLE*. *Connie Willis* was the winner of Best Novel for her book "To Say Nothing of the Dog". I cannot cover all the awards here, but the full list of Hugo winners is covered in *THYME*.

The "Ditmars" were presented by Marc Ortlieb and Leanne Frahm at the "Other Awards" Ceremony, along with the Japanese 1998 and 1999 "Seiun" best sf awards and the "Chandler Award" from the Australian Science Fiction Foundation, the latter awarded to Sydney's Graham Stone, who can boast to over fifty years in fandom, and who I can tell you was very surprised to receive it. Harper Collins publishers cleaned up the fiction awards with their *The Resurrected Man* by Sean Williams winning the Best Novel and the Best Short Fiction and Best Anthology - "The Truth About Weenies" by David Lake in Jack Dann and Janeen Webb's "Dreaming Down-Under"

The Best Fanzine went to Bruce Gillespie again for *The Metaphysical Review*. Ian Gunn Best Fan Artist, as well as his Hugo, which indicates the high regard that all fandom, here and overseas, had for him, while Nick Stathopoulos won Best Professional Artist for his cover of Jack Dann's "The Man Who Melted". Nick's cover for the convention booklet included a depiction of our beloved then premier of Victoria Jeff Kennett, as a broken down statue in a future world, which lots of Victorian fans laughingly objected to, but which proved to be curiously prophetic as the next state election reduced this noisy rooster to the proverbial feather duster.

We certainly met lots of interesting people like Hugo winning fanzine editor Dave Langford, for *ANSIBLE* again, briefly spoke to old friends such as Joe and Gay Haldeman, Robert Silverberg, Charles Brown, Rusty Hevlin and Fred Patton. Enjoyed getting together with Australian fans now living interstate including John Foyster, John and Monica Litchen, Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown and Cedric Rowley. Merv and Janet Barrett from New Zealand and lots others. At the book launch parties we were invited to, Random House launched the winning novel of the George Turner Prize, *TIME FUTURE* by Maxine McArthur. Harper Collins celebrated *DREAMING DOWN UNDER* edited by Jack Dann and Janeen Webb; and my old acquaintance Barry Jones, who I knew back at my once employers McGills Newsagency when he was winning all the cash on *PICK A BOX*, launched *GEORGE TURNER A LIFE** by Judy Buckrich, for Melbourne University Press.

Helena and I very much appreciated being able to talk to old and new acquaintances at the book launches, both in the fan field and the professional side of sf.

Yes, there were many good things about this World Con for me, including attending the first con with Helena as my wife and introducing her to the friends I had met at other cons over the years. Our meagre budget made things a bit tough, but we did get together with a few friends for a meal or a drink. We finally got to one room party, a 'dead dog' one at the nearby *GRAND HOTEL* on the last night of the con on our way home. So summing it all up, it was a sometimes nostalgic experience, enlightening, annoying, and happy but also very sad, because of the people not attending from all over, including the late George Turner, other friends who just could not make it, like Wynne Whiteford, Lee Harding and John Bangsund, who have all been unwell, Forry Ackerman, Andy Porter, from the USA and not to forget my old mate Paul Stevens: now resident in Perth, and just knowing that this is the last time most likely, because of our financial circumstances mainly, that we will ever get to attend a World Con again, or meet many of our friends in person. And it did not help to come home and watch the last episode of our favourite TV series, *BABYLON FIVE*, and see the producer turn the key himself to blow it all to kingdom come.

FIWOL!

Merv B



A SALUTE FROM STRAEDE AT THE DITMARS

Front row, left to right: Bruce Gillespie, Bill Wright, Dick (Ditmar) Jenssen, John Straede, Cheryl Straede.

AUSSIECON 3

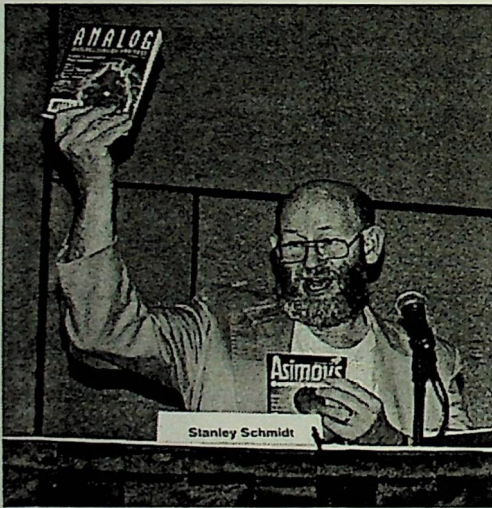
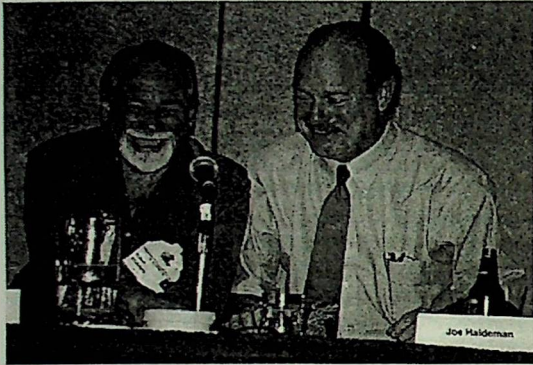
Photos by Helena Roberts Binns

This page:

Top left: (Race Matthews with Peter Hamilton)
Left upper: (Robert Silverberg and Joe Haldeman). Left lower: (Stanley Schmidt). Right lower: (Stephen Baxter, winner of the Japanese 'Seiun' award). Bottom: (Leigh Edmonds, Bill Wright, Dick Jenssen, Merv Barrett, Merv Binns, on one of the 'Fanhistoricon' panels.).

Opposite page:

Top left: (Pro GOH Gregory Benford). Middle left: (Media GOH J. Michael Straczynski). Top right: (Random House representative Shona Martyn presenting the George Turner Prize to 1999 winner Maxine McArthur.) Middle right: (Fan GOH Bruce Gillespie) Bottom right: (HUGO award winners and acceptors Dave Langford, Bruce Gillespie for Thomas M. Disch, , Karen Pender-Gunn for Ian Gunn, Anne Lesley Groell for Connie Willis, Candas Jane Dorsey for Nalo Hopkinson, Jack Dann for Gardner Dozois and Michael Swanwick).

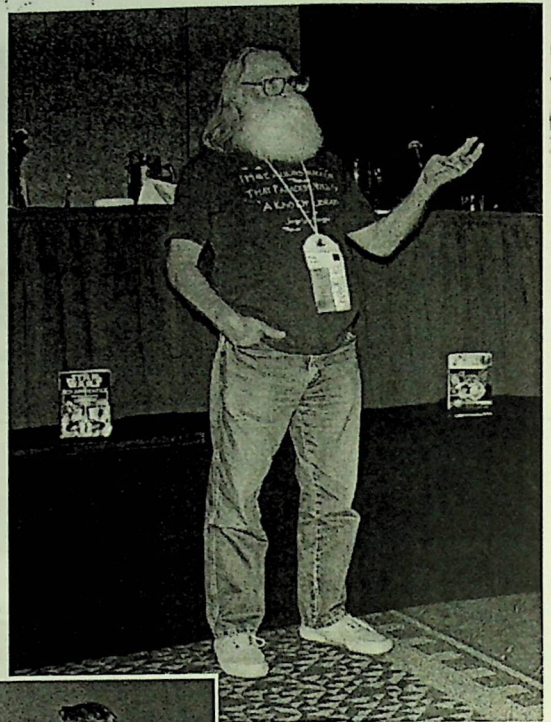




THE DITMARS



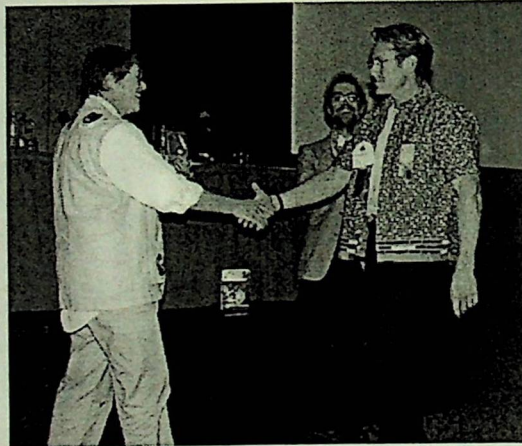
JACK DANN and JANEEN WEBB with their Awards for Australian Magazine or Anthology, for "Dreaming Down-Under"



RUSTY HEVLIN
The Eternal Fan



Artist NICK STATHOPOULOS, winner of the DITMAR for Professional Artwork, for the covers of "Dreaming Down-Under" and "The Man Who Melted", who sub-awarded it to Shaun Tam, for "The Rabbits". (Nick, we all know Shaun's a great artist, but so are you. Enough, already!)



PAUL COLLINS, receiving his William Atheling Jr Award for Criticism or Review for his MUP Encyclopaedia of Australian SF, from Leanne Frahm. (Marc Ortlieb in background)



HOMAGE TO DITMAR AT THE DITMARS

An embarrassed DITMAR JENSSEN responding to a tribute to his presence at the awards ceremony that bears his name.

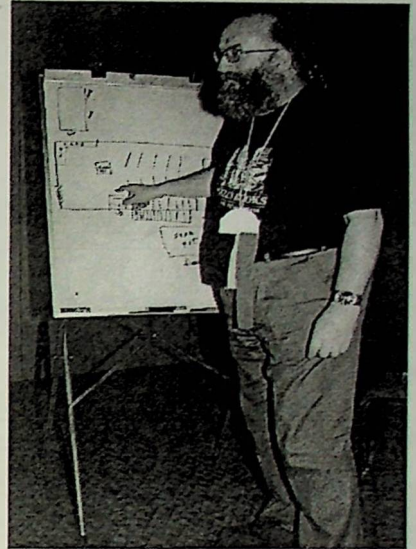
FANHISTORICON

RELICS OF MELBOURNE'S '50s 'FIRST FANDOM'

Right: FANHISTORICON convenor **JOHN FOYSTER** (Melbourne late '50s, now based in Adelaide, an organizer of *fannish* events from way back), explaining the layout of the MSFC's old clubrooms, in FANHISTORICON's *"REMEMBERING SOMERSET PLACE"*.

GoH Bruce Gillespie with surviving fossils of Melbourne's first attempts at organized fandom.

From left, back row: *Bruce Gillespie, Mervyn Barrett (originally from Wellington, NZ, in Melbourne from late '50s to early '60s), Bill Wright (late '50s), Tony Sander (Melbourne '50s, now in Sydney).* Front row: *Race Matthews (co-founder, '51), Helena (Margaret Duce) Roberts Binns (First FemFan '58), Merv Binns (co-founder, '51), Dick (Ditmar) Jenssen (co-founder, '51).*



THE FOUNDERS

The panel at FANHISTORICON's *"ORIGINS OF THE MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUB: THE 1950s"*

Second from left, moderator *Karen Pender Gunn* (a non-fossil). Next, *Merv Binns*. At either end, school chums and SF readers from a very early age. *Race Matthews* (left) and *Dick Jenssen* (right), reminiscing about their first encounters (at about age 15) with *Bob McCubbin*, a middle-aged schoolteacher, the first mature science fiction fan they'd met. (For a picture of Bob, with SF author *Bert Chandler*, see page 8) Around this time or a little later, a 17-year-old *Merv Binns* (also an avid junior SF fan) started work at McGills bookshop, where he too encountered *Bob McCubbin* in quest of SF. By 1951, Bob and the enthusiastic trio of teenagers had founded the *MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION GROUP*, later to become the *MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUB*.



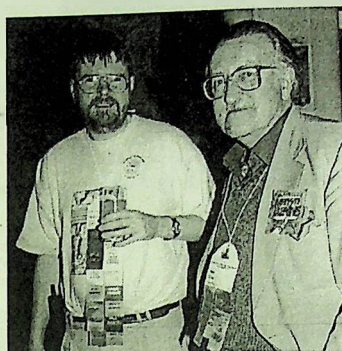
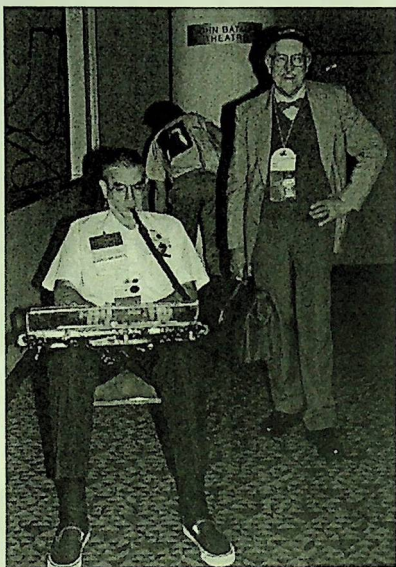
MERV BINNS cracking up at Race's reminiscences at the "ORIGINS" panel.



THE ENTERTAINER:

ERWIN "FILTHY PIERRE" STRAUSS, travelling musician and sometimes calliope player, a familiar feature at American conventions and World cons.

With Merv Binns at AUSSIECON 3.



THE EDITORS:

ALAN STEWART, editor of *THYME*, co-editor of *ASFN*, and *MERV BINNS*, co-editor of *ASFN* and perpetrator of *THE RUBBISH BIN(NS)*.



BNF panelists JOYCE SCRIVNER, JOHN FOYSTER and DAVE LANGFORD at FANHISTORICON's "THREE CULTURES" session.



BNA panelists STANLEY SCHMIDT, ELIZABETH MOON and TERRY PRATCHETT discussing "RESEARCH FOR SF WRITERS" at the Hats panel.