

# THE SCIENCE FICTION FAN







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## GIVE A LOOK

by Jack Gillespie

Once upon a time, there was a guy named Joe. Joe was a science-fiction fan. But, he wasn't only a science-fiction fan. He was one of those rarities among fans. He had an honest to-gosh interest in science. Joe was quite the stuff.

Joe had push. He joined a club, and soon he was head of it, and when he was head of a club, that club was going to be something. Because Joe had an ideal. His club would become an educational and scientific institution. Science-fiction was to have little to do with the attainment of this ideal, except to act as a stimulus. Things, however, went blooey, and poor Joe was disillusioned, and in 1937 Joe said: "Scientifiction far from being a stimulus to scientific study has become an end in itself.... The readers who should have been interested in academic work and technical education, seemed more inclined to dilly dally with pulp writing, editing and cartooning." Joe was disgusted.

Now, however, Joe is again quite the fan. At the very mention of the word science-fiction, he goes and gurgles.

"Why?" did you say. (but of course you did.)

Welllll --- I have a theory. Some think Joe kicked his ideals in an ashcan and simply wants to be a big frog in a little pond. I am inclined to believe that Joe thinks with certain malignant influences disposed of, he can build a club that will become an educational and scientific institution. The plan being something like this:

First get all the readers of science-fiction he can lay his hands on, collect them into one organization that has all the hokum---story reviews, rubbing elbows with authors and editors, etc. Every thing to delight the young reader. Give me the boy from one to ten, says Joe. Then by easy stages, feed the gallant crew - SCIENCE - thru the rubber nossle.

If this be Joe's plan his enlity against the Futurians is very understandable. Politics and Joe's plans don't mix. Injecting politics into the pure and simple minds of Joe's converts would be the beginning of their mental deterioration.

The unfortunate of all this is that Joe was right the first time. The "fans" like their little world and are only superficially interested in science. The majority of fans in any organization would tolerate science instruction for just so long and then ignore it---either the science or the organization. What I am driving at is that Joe will never make science fans out of science-fiction fans. He might interest his neophytes in scientific pursuits, for a time, but sooner or later they will be more inclined to dilly dally with pulp writing, editing and cartooning, or---saving the world. Then again they might quietly enter the cloak and suit business. Who knows.

Oh yes, you might wonder just who Joe is. He had another name once, but he became very touchy about it, for it seemed that when anyone used it he would do all sorts of nasty things, such as playing around with lawyers, threatening law-suits, and generally making himself disagreeable. Now everybody just calles him Joe.

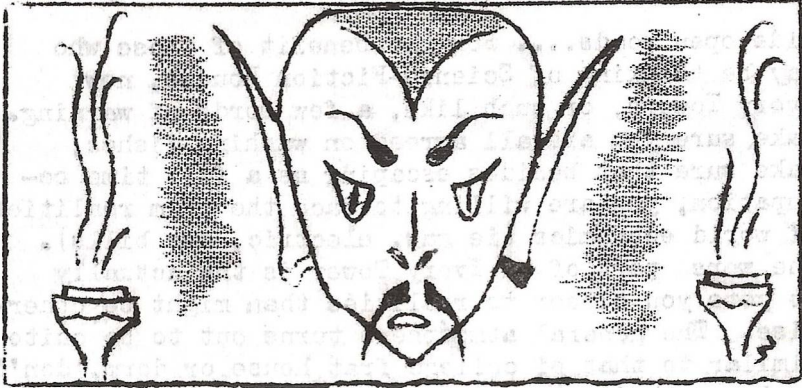
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Note: The above is mostly hypothetical and the chances are against my analysis being correct. I should like it known that I consider articles like the above one of the more stupid of the pastimes in which fans engage. It is no simple matter to ascertain the ideals, hopes, ambitions, and dreams of people who are very close to you much less casual acquaintances, and when the junior psychoanglyst league and adolescent know-it-all, like myself cease yelping, things will be much pleasanter all around.

But, honestly folks, I just couldn't resist.





## FANFARADE

by Donald A. Wollheim

The Ivory Tower, after seeing a year's existence, will have to break itself sadly apart come September. Reasons are multifold but primarily have to do with the same sort of thing that killed off the famous London Flat. That is the war situation. With conscription on its way, none of the Towerites dare take the responsibility to sign a new lease, for all the Towerites are eligible for the draft and it is probable the government will not appear too convinced that science-fiction writers and literary agents are working in key industries. So that indications are all sad now. The writer of this column will probably return to his ancestral hold, though not 801 West End, and stop worrying about washing dishes (that's one consolation anyway!!) John Michel will either stay at his former stronghold two blocks away from the Tower or else take a couple of rooms with Doc Lowndes somewhere in the city. Dick Wilson intends to leave his bank job and take up writing as a serious full time occupation. To do this he will take another smaller apt somewhere in the city with Dave Kyle who is also hitting the typewriter keys for a living this Fall. Dirk Wylie, at present in Queens Village, may just possible move into their Carved Soap Tower also. Chet Cohen, may take pack to back and hit the

wide open roads.... For the benefit of those who may be thinking of Science-Fiction Houses, new Ivory Towers, or such like, a few words of warning. Make sure you are all agreed on washing dishes, make sure that besides escaping as a full time occupation, you are willing to face the grim realities of world economics (ie gas, electric, etc bills). The worst part of an Ivory Tower is that actually it gets you closer to realities than might be otherwise. The general atmosphere turns out to be quite similar to that of college frat house or dorm, don't be too methodical or fanatical about order and cleanliness. Take it free and easy and if the floor is swept once a week, don't complain, be glad it gets swept that often.... Also if people develop odd habits of staying awake all night reading stf, don't grumble. ....One thing the Towerites did that no other fan group could do was the institution of a wall newspaper. That is a single sheet bulletin tacked up on a bulletin board about twice a week carrying news items. It may have one copy but it gets about fifteen to twenty readers just the same. The first title of ours was THE IVORY TOWER BUGLE-GAZETTE and the title has been changed almost continually. Editions have been written by many people and in many formats. Strangest of all was the first Latin fan-mag, the edition called TABULA FUTURIANA which was turned out by Cyril Kornbluth (Gottesman) whom be it known can handle Latin fluently. A complete listing of all the titles will probably drive R. D. Swisher frantic...Is the idea of a World Science-Fiction Convention to make an annual institution? And if so, where is it to be held next year? Sentiment calls for Los Angeles, but we have heard that they want it for 1942. I suggest either Boston or Washington.

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 The Book Review by R. V. Hunt on page 15 is re-  
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## VAGABONDIA.

## or Doc's Ditherings

What would you do if you were an editor? Suppose a publisher, new to stf, contacted you, offered you the post of captain of a new stf magazine? The publisher is giving you a virtually free hand, inasmuch as you know stf and he does not. Your only responsibility (insofar as he is concerned) is to circulation figures; they are to be the supreme court.

Here's our ideas on the subject: First of all we must make the magazine as attractive as possible to the newsstand observer. No matter how excellent our stories may be, if we cannot put out something that attracts attention, then no one will know whether our fiction is good or bad. That entails, cover, title, make-up, print, departments, etc..

The first thing our reader (potential) sees is the cover. That entails, colors, title, drawing, scene. The title must be laid out in such a way that it can be distinguished across a room. The design of it has to be different enough that it is not taken, at first glance, as some other magazine. Standardization of title layout makes for confusion. The cover itself is a poster. But, there are a great many kind of posters. What we want is a cover which will not only stand out among a batch of non stf magazines, but one which will stand out among the group of fantastic covers which makes up the stf and weird-mag display as well. We have a choice: It can stand out by (a) being gaudier than the rest (b) being different (such as a design, cartoon effect, astronomical plate, etc) or (c) being quietly compelling---an effect difficult to achieve, but one which will bring results.

There is then, make-up, print, illustrations, etc. Some people turn to the contents page; some thumb through the illustrations, some note the print etc. The contents page must be legible, attractive compelling. There must also be a sufficiently large



number of items listed. These are hard times: people will buy a magazine which gives the most for their money first. Thus, one or two long stories, & a good number of short stories listed is desirable; thus several interesting-appearing departments are incumbent. We have to convince the new reader, in the space of a moment or so that here is something worth his money, worth, that is, a try.

**Illustrations:** The opening one must be good, attractive. There must be a variety of types. Obviously, if every scene shows a space-ship, or planet scene, it will not be attractive to anyone except those already sold on such. There must be humans on the cover, in the illustrations---well drawn. A pretty girl on the cover helps, though she isn't always essential.

**Type:** Obviously, it must be neat and easily readable. Story titles must be appealing and suggestive of what the story really is. You cannot have your cover, titles, and illustrations tell one story, while the fiction itself is something else---not if you expect the readers to take your mag.

**Departments: Serials?** These are come-ons. frankly, there must be an incentive to buy the next issue, one that is present even before the issue is read. Serials are sometimes too blatant in that respect. Your come-on must be subtle, yet compelling.

Here we have all these commercial considerations before we've even accepted a single story, as it were. As a fan we want to put out a magazine of which we can be proud. But we also have to put out a magazine which we can sell. To think that this latter goal can be achieved without some measure of sacrifice in regards to our desires is silly, unless our desires just happen to run along those channels.

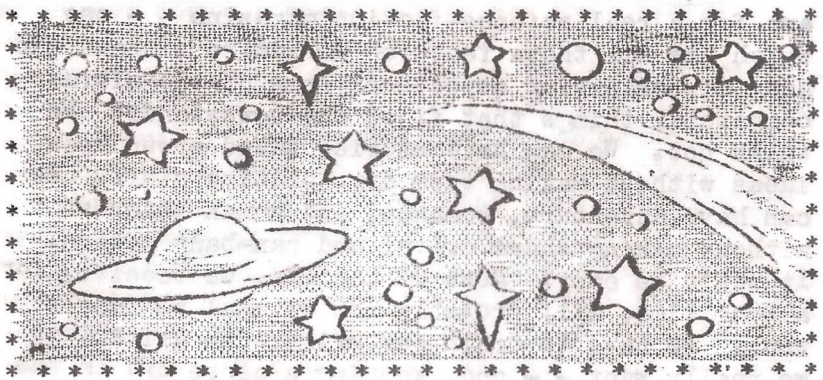
Yet, must we despair? Must we give up our dre-



ams for a real science-fiction magazine -- one which has all these features we admire without the many discomfoting aspects of some of the ultra-commercial things that flood the newsstands? We think not. We can have stories based around new ideas without making them dry, oldtime stuff. We can have adventure, romance, and human interest without making sheer drivel and ban-bang action. It won't be easy. Most of the mss. we receive, for a long time, will probably not be what we really want. We have to train our writers to write what we really want -- and, keeping a close eye on the circulation and readers' letters, modify our wants without discarding them. Obviously if a type of story which we like very much receives only indifference and complaint, it has to go. Again, if we receive floods of requests for a certain type of story for which we do not particularly care for, we must accede -- insisting only that it is well done.

Eventually, we will realize that, instead of putting out our ideal science-fiction magazine, we have only another (slightly different) stf magazine undertoned with our personality rather than with the personality of some other editor. We will find to our sorrow that much of what we consider the best stuff just didn't go over; much of what we considered fill-in went over with a bang. But, if we are a capable, interested editor, we will find a great deal over which we can crow happily. And, if the great god circulation is kind to us, we will find ourselves continually dissatisfied with each new goal achieved, moving on to newer goals. Though we may not consciously realize it, we will be happy as long as we put out a magazine which is much better than we think in moments of depression, if never as good as we hope for in moments of enthusiasm.

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 Have you seen IT? --- What? --- Why, THE ALCHEMIST!  
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## COMMENTARY

by R. W. Lowndes

At the moment of writing, we are half-amused, half-chagrined at the thought of the entire Chicago Science Fiction Convention's being in honor of Dr. E. E. Smith. Not that Dr. Smith has not written excellent tales: he has. Not that, despite of our disagreements with him on many points therein, that we have not enjoyed all of them: we have. Not, that thirdly, Dr. Smith is not a jolly good fellow: he is. But that his influence upon science fiction, while considerable, reached its high-water mark some years back.

Dr. Smith (followed closely by John W. Campbell Jr.) introduced "heavy science" to magazine stf. They went farther into space, discovered bigger forces and combinations of forces than any of the others. Their tales were super-epics; they made moon-flight or Mars-flight stories seem as ordinary, in comparison, as a story with its locale in New York City.

But Science Fiction (pulp) today has not been re-patterned from their innovations. The stories we read are not super-galactic, inter-dimensional epics. These are rare, in fact. On reason for



this is the well-noted fact that the stf writer is seldom a scientist (curse the term, but it does seem to fit here) as are Smith and Campbell. Despite the imaginative scope of tales by such individuals, their currents are held down to a strict scientific discipline of cause and effect. When you read of a particular phenomenon in a Smith or Campbell tale, you can feel secure in the knowledge that, the described effect would be the logical and scientific probability. They checked these things out scientifically when planning the tales. However, the fact remains that the super-epic is not the keynote of current stf.

What, then, is the dominant tale? Discounting, of course, the flood of sheer adventure, spy, detective, etc stories in flimsy stf trappings that fill many of the magazines. More and more, it is turning (has been for years) to whimsy, satire, light fantastic, humor, etc. It is sheer escape. And the stf (pulp) writer whose works have had the most effect upon the field, ushering in this new undercurrent has been Stanley G. Weinbaum.

As an example, let's take some of the most popular tales going today. In *Amazing*, we have a host of humorous stories, dealing with amusingly fantastic ideas and inventions. This, true, goes back to the old "Hicks Inventions With A Kick" etc days, but Weinbaum re-introduced them with the *Van Maderpoota* series. In *Thrilling Wonder*, we have the Gerry Carlyle-Tony Quade series, which stem from Weinbaum's tales of exploration, screwy animals, etc. Running through these there is a light note of realism absent in the tales of that type previous to the days of SGW. The characters are human and understandable. They do rather big things at times, but nothing beyond the range of credibility. Like wise the Peter Manx time - traveling stories. In *Amazing* the Adam Link tales give a human touch to the old robot-thriller. Rather than the hackneyed theme of a Frankensteinian invention destroying its maker,

the tales are told from the robot's point of view and its struggle against the suspicion of human beings. Giving Adam Link emotions is carrying it a bit far, but it certainly is far better than the old anti-scientific robot-menace tales. The everyman touch - again, Weinbaum. (Dr. Keller, of course, had this years before SGW. However, Keller's tales are often obscure due to the fact that they deal with psychological factors not too comprehensible for the average reader who has not had Keller's background and experience. People do act as Dr. Keller writes, but it doesn't sound convincing to the lay reader.) Astounding has almost completely captured the undercurrents of the new stf and, though the influence of SGW is not as easily traceable, it is there.

The result of all this is that, although there may not be as many great stories in the new stf as with the old, there are many more good stories. Except for the magazines which specialize in bootleg stf (as I call most of Amazing's stuff) the new reader will find much more to his or her enjoyment than he or she did five or so years back.

All this, of course, is probably not pleasurable for the older readers or fans to contemplate. I cannot particularly enjoy it myself. The new stf (despite its polish) is not the daring, prophetic stuff that the original stf was. It takes a few stock stf concepts for granted and skips away happily.

But such is the world-situation that this is the only type of pulp stf that can keep going; the old type cannot be written today; could not sell if it were written and published.

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In a letter to the editor of "Fan", dated 7-18-40, Georges H. Gallet has asked me to extend his greetings to his USA stf correspondents. OPW/SFF

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ten before the first War, the trip around the world by air has since been accomplished.

It is impossible to tell the date of publication of the other novels of his as they only carry the date of the original Munsey copyright. The serial library that carried them is entitled "The Adventure Library". No 120 of this library is A ROUND TRIP TO THE YEAR 2000, or A Flight Through Time. The book is written in a facetious vein and concerns a trip from the year 1900 via a time machine to 2000. In that century, we run across many of the stock things - robots, super science, the country has become an almost Utopia, almost because people don't know what to do with themselves -- everything inventable has been invented, everything has been solved. In the resulting ennui, dissatisfaction grows, and the heroes are glad to escape with their lives back to the good old past.

MARCOONED IN 1492, or Under Fortune's Flag (No. 125), tells of a return to the past via the swallowing of a strange drug. The characters return to the period of Columbus and immediately get themselves into difficult predicaments because of what they know. They champion Christopher and generally tangle themselves up with history.

ADRIFT IN THE UNKNOWN or Queer Adventures in a Queer Real (#131) is an interplanetary novel. A professor, a thief and three millionaires get tangled up on a far off planet wherein they undergo many harrowing and enlightening experiences. Cook shakes a wicked finger at the plutocratic millionaires, since he has them kidnapped off the earth for their evil deeds. Parts of this yarn are reminiscent of much of the type of yarn we may read today in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES except that Cook was obviously writing with tongue in cheek and the present writers probably take themselves seriously.

#140 is THE EIGHTH WONDER or Working for Marvels. This is least directly science-fictional of the lot. It is more of a Western yarn with a scientific in-



vention background. A professor invents a super-magnet for super-mining. Bad men try to wreck it or steal it and the heros fight off the villians in approved Wild West fashion

Last is titled CASTAWAY AT THE POLE and is number 144 of the Adventure Library. It is the old tale of Polar explorers seeking the North Pole and finding it only to find that a lost nation of civilized people lives there. The usual story develops without any unexpectedly different ending.

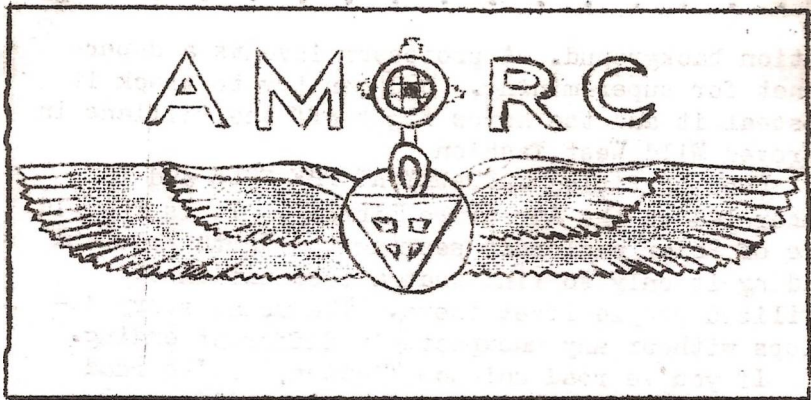
If you've read science-fiction, you've read all of Cook's plots done over a dozen different ways time and again. Cook may have written them as original but I doubt that. In any case a reading of Cook is a good way of acquiring that blase attitude. When you have read Cook's novels, you have read practically everything that has been written since. You'll keep encountering his situations and plots forever after.

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BOOK REVIEW

THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS.

The publishers of this extraordinary volume have for the past two years and with great effort and expense, collected the superb writings of the late Howard Phillips Lovecraft, and brought them out in book form. Needless to say it is the most outstanding volume of bizarre classics ever to be published. You will entirely forget that you are reading printed pages as you are swept completely into the outer realms by Lovecraft's vivid word pictures. Only here can you get the full meaning of horror and nameless things out of cosmic depths and time's abyss. Here in this volume all the splendours and marvels of far flung galaxies are layed before your eyes in an unending pageantry of weirdness.\*\*The book is a huge volume and contains most of Lovecraft's masterpieces totaling thirty-six stories in all. This splendid volume is topped off by a beautifully drawn jacket by Virgil Finlay, the famous artist. Send \$5 to August Derleth, Sauk City, Wisconsin.



ROSI-CRUCIAN Secret Teachings are offered to those who seek to use them solely for the perfection of their inner faculties, and in the mastering of the daily obstacles of life; the International Organization of Rosicrucians will be happy to receive the requests of those who believe that worthiness and sincerity determine the right for one to have such wisdom; to them, a copy of "The Secret Heritage," a fascinating book, will be given without price; let this book guide you to the conservative plan whereby you may widen your scope of Personal Power. Simply address your letter to Scribe O. H. A., AMORC Temple, Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, California.