

BRUM GROUP NEWS

May 1994

Issue 272

*The monthly newsletter of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group
(Honorary Presidents: Brian W Aldiss & Harry Harrison)*

GROUP CHAIRMAN - BERNIE EVANS, SECRETARY - RICHARD STANDAGE, NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MARTIN TUDOR,
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DAVID HUNTER, NOVAACON 24 CHAIRMAN - RICHARD STANDAGE, NOVAACON 25 CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON.

This month's speaker is
GWYNETH JONES
who will address the Group
on Friday 20th May 1994

7.45 for 8.00pm

Admittance: Members £2.50 Visitors £3.75

Gwyneth Ann Jones was born in 1952. A UK writer who is perhaps best known for the three complex adult sf novels - *DIVINE ENDURANCE* (1984), *ESCAPE PLANS* (1986) and *KAIROS* (1988) - which were published in the 80s. The bulk of her work has been in the juvenile field beginning with the fantasy *WATER IN THE AIR* (1977), since her fourth novel *DEAR HILL* (1980) she has written sf and fantasy exclusively. Her more recent works include *WHITE QUEEN* (1991), which deals with a bizarre alien invasion, *FLOWERDUST* (1993), which deals with some of the characters from *DIVINE ENDURANCE* and *NORTH WIND* (1994), a sequel to *WHITE QUEEN*. With the exception of *THE HIDDEN ONES* (1988) all of Gwyneth's juvenile novels were published under the name Ann Halam. These include the post-holocaust Zanne series - *THE DAYMAKER* (1987), *TRANSFORMATIONS* (1988) and *THE SKYBREAKER* (1990), - *ALLY ALLY ASTER* (1981) and *THE ALDER TREE* (1982) which deal with Norse and Gothic material, the ghost story *DEATH'S GARDEN* (1986) and the time travel tale *DINOSAUR JUNCTION* (1992).

The BSFG meets at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) in the upstairs Function Room of the Australian Bar, corner of Hurst Street and Bromsgrove Street in Birmingham city centre. The annual subscription rates (which include twelve copies of this newsletter and reduced price entry to meetings) are £10.00 per person, or £13.50 for 2 members at the same address. Cheques etc. payable to "the Birmingham Science Fiction Group", via the treasurer Helena Bowles at meetings or by post c/o Bernie Evans (address below). Book reviews and review copies should be sent to the reviews editor Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH (tel: 021 558 0997). All other contributions and enquiries regarding the Brum Group News to: Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Birmingham, B8 2AG (tel: 021 327 3023).

COLOPHON

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Personal opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the membership of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group.

All text by Martin Tudor except where stated otherwise.

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Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS for typing the book reviews, STEVE GREEN, MATRIX, WHAT'S ON and others for the news in the Jophan Report and Events listing and, of course, TONY BERRY for the use of his spare room.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

19-21 MAY 1994: *BRIMSTONE AND TREACLE* the dark, disturbing comedy by Dennis Potter will be showing at the Hexagon, MAC, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, from 7.45pm.

20 MAY 1994: GWYNETH JONES, author of *DIVINE ENDURANCE*, *ESCAPE PLANS*, *KAIROS*, *WHITE QUEEN*, *NORTH WIND* and a number of sf and fantasy juveniles, will be addressing the BSFG, 7.45pm for 8pm at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham.

21 MAY 1994: GWYNETH JONES will be signing copies of *NORTH WIND* the sequel to *WHITE QUEEN* at Andromeda book shop, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham from noon.

20-22 MAY 1994: MEXICON 6 - THE PARTY. 10th anniversary celebration of the first Mexican

and the 20th of Tynecon 1. Friday night is party night, the formal programme begins on Saturday and finishes Sunday afternoon. The Hertford Park Hotel, Stevenage. Attending £9.50, room rates £19.50 per person twin/double and £22.50 single. Contact: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

20 MAY-2 JUNE 1994: *FEARLESS* - Jeff Bridges stars as the sole survivor of a plane crash who claims to be invulnerable. Showing at the Triangle Cinema, Holt Street, Aston University. Call 021 359 3979 for details.

27-30 MAY 1994: *INCONCEIVABLE*. Second 'humour' con from Octarine, Tudor Court Hotel, Draycott, near Derby. Attending £25.00 (£23.00 for members of Octarine or ZZ9). Contact 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby, DE23 6ES.

28-30 MAY 1994: *ADAMS FAMILY VALUES* will be showing at the MAC cinema, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham from 3pm each day.

30 MAY - 4 JUNE 1994: *GOODSPELL* stage musical at the Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham. Call the Box Office 021 633 3325.

2 JUNE 1994: TERRY PRATCHETT will be signing copies of the new Discworld hardcover, *SOUL MUSIC*, from 5pm at Andromeda book shop, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham.

2 JUNE 1994: *THE FISHER KING* Terry Gilliam's modern fairytale starring Robin Williams, Jeff Bridges and Amanda Plummer will be showing at the Triangle Cinema, Holt Street, Aston University. Call 021 359 3979 for details.

4 JUNE 1994: IAN EDGINGTON ex-BSFG member will be launching *BLADE...THE VAMPIRE HUNTER*, a new on-going series from Marvel comics, at Magic Labyrinth, Rutland Street, Leicester. Signing due to start at noon. However, given Image's reputation for publishing late it is advisable to call 0533 518178 to confirm.

4 JUNE 1994: COMIC MART at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham from midday. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW for further details.

12 JUNE 1994: *BEDDEVIL* a set of three ghost stories; about a mud-dwelling phantom GI, an invisible but seismic train, and a warehouse squat haunted by a past tragedy and occupied by an Aboriginal family and drag artist. will showing at the Triangle Cinema, Holt Street,

Aston University. Call 021 359 3979 for details.

MID-JUNE 1994: IAIN BANKS will be signing copies of his new novel *FEERSUM ENDJINN* at Andromeda book shop, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, call 021 643 1999 for further details.

12 JUNE 1994: COMIC MART YMCA, Granby Street, Leicester, opens noon. Contact Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

14 JUNE 1994: BEDEVIL will be showing from 9.30pm at the Arts Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry. Call box office on 0203 524524.

17-22 JUNE 1994: KAFKA Steven Soderbergh's bizarre biography, shot in black and white and starring Jeremy Irons, Theresa Russell and Joel Grey. Showing at the Triangle Cinema, Holt Street, Aston University. Call 021 359 3979 for further details.

30 JUNE - 2 JULY 1994: FRANKENSTEIN'S MOTHERS "returning to the University of Warwick Arts Centre after their hit show *BLOODY MARY AND THE VIRGIN QUEEN*, Foursight conjure up the ghosts of Mary Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft in this gothic fantasy exploring the rage of the outcast, the despair of the alienated, the ambivalence of creation and everyone's quest for love." University of Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, call 0203 524524 for details (price £6.50 or £4.75).

SUMMER 1994: Beer & Skittles Evening call Helena Bowles on 021 558 7591 for details.

1-5 SEPTEMBER 1994: CONADIAN, 52nd world science fiction convention, at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. Guests of Honour Anne McCaffrey, George Barr, Barry B Longyear, Fan Guest of Honour Robert Runte. Contact: Helen McCarthy, 147 Francis Road, London, E10 6NT.

26 SEPTEMBER - 1 OCTOBER 1994: RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET at the Birmingham Hippodrome. Monday-Thursday 7.30pm, Friday 5pm, 8.30pm, Saturday 4pm, 8pm. Prices Monday-Thursday £17.50, £15, £12, £10, £8; Friday & Saturday evenings £19.50, £17, £15, £11, £9; Friday 5pm all seats £7.50; Saturday 4pm £14, £12, £10, £8, £7. Call 021-622-7486 for further booking information.

30 SEP - 2 OCT 1994: FANTASYCON 19. Annual British fantasy convention. Venue and price

tba. GoH Brian Lumley, MoG Graham Joyce. Contact: Peter Coleborn, 46 Oxford Road, Acoccs Green, Birmingham, B27 6DT.

21-24 OCTOBER 1994: ALBACON '94. Central Hotel, Glasgow. Attending £25.00, supp. £15.00 until 31 April 1994. Contact: M. Drayton, 10 Atlas Road, Springburn, Glasgow, G21 4TE.

4-6 NOVEMBER 1994: NOVACON 24 the Brum Group's own sf convention at the Royal Angus Hotel. Guest of Honour Graham Joyce. Attending £25.00, supporting £8.00. Cheques payable to "Novacon 24" should be sent to: CAROL MORTON, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

11-13 NOVEMBER 1994: UNIFICATION '94 multi-media convention at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham. *QUANTUM LEAP, STAR TREK, DR WHO, ROBIN OF SHERWOOD, STAR WARS, V, TIME TRAX, DS9* and many more, plus guests, quizzes and games. For further information write to: Unification, Clifton House, 27 Clifton Place, Newton Bar, Wakefield, WF1 3JH.

11-14 NOVEMBER 1994: CULT TV "an appreciation weekend" at Seacroft Holiday Village, Hemsby, Norfolk, from £59.00 per adult. Guests include: Harlan Ellison, Sylvia Anderson, Annette Andre, Sophie Aldred, Victor Pemberton, Barry Letts, Deborah Watling. For further details call: 0772-622555, or send a SSAE to CULT TV, PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE1 1EX.

14-17 APRIL 1995: CONFABULATION 46th UK National sf con at the Britannia International Hotel, London. GoHs Lois McMaster Bujold, Bob Shaw and Roger Robinson. Attending £20.00, supporting £10.00 before 31 December 1994. Contact: Confabulation, 3 York Street, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH.

24-28 AUGUST 1995: INTERSECTION, 53rd world-con, Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Glasgow. Guests of honour Samuel R Delany, Gerry Anderson, Vine Clarke. Attending £60.00 until 30 September 1994. Supporting and Junior (24.8.80) £15.00, Child (24.8.88) £5.00. Contact: Admail 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR, Scotland.

3-5 NOVEMBER 1995: NOVACON 25 the Brum Group's own sf convention at a new venue - the Chamberlain Hotel, Alcester Street, Birmingham. Guests of Honour: Brian W Aldiss, Harry Harrison and Bob Shaw, with Special Guest Iain Banks. Currently membership is only available to members of NOVACON 24, who should send £20.00 to CAROL MORTON, 14 Park

Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS, cheques should be made payable to "Novacon 25". Memberships will rise to £23.00 at Novacon 24 and will be available to non-members of NOVAACON 24 from 7 November 1994 for £25.00. Room rates are £20.00 per person per night in twin/double and £40.00 pppn in a single, prices include full English breakfast.

5-8 APRIL 1996: **EVOLUTION** 47th UK National Convention, Metropole Hotel, Brighton. GoHs: Colin Greenland, Bryan Talbot, Jack Cohen. Attending £20.00, supp. £12.00. Contact: 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

27 DEC 1999 - 2 JAN 2000: **MILLENNIUM**. Venue to be announced, but definitely in Northern Europe (probably a BeNeLux country or UK), £3.00 (£10.00) per year, to be deducted from eventual membership fee (to be announced before 1997). Contact: Malcolm Reid, 2/R, 9 Airlie Street, Hyndland, Glasgow, G12 9RJ.

Although details are correct to the best of my knowledge, I advise readers to contact organizers prior to travelling. Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the above contact addresses. Please mention the BRUM GROUP NEWS when replying to listings or advertisements. If you know of any events which you think may be of interest to members of the BSFG please send details to the Editor.

CHAIR'S BIT

by Bernie Evans

Just a few lines to apologise to all our members, and especially to our guest Gwyneth Jones, for my absence from this month's meeting. When I took the job of Registrations for Mexicon I didn't know that I would, by the time the convention took place, be your Chairman, and I can't really absent myself from a convention at which I'm supposed to be front man on the desk.

I hope you'll all understand this, and will give Tony Morton, who has agreed to act in my place, your full support.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank both Tony, for standing in for me, and his wife Carol, who is standing in for Mick on the book reviews desk, for their help in this. See you all next month.

JOPHAN REPORT #74

Kim Stanley Robinson's *RED MARS* picked up the Nebula Award for best novel on 23 April. Best novella went to Jack Cady for "The Night We Buried Road Dog", best novelette "Georgia on My Mind" by Charles Sheffield, best short story "Graves" by Joe Haldeman".

Jeff Noon picked up a £1000 cheque from astronaut Helen Sharman on 20 April after his debut novel, *VURT*, won the eighth Arthur C Clarke Award. Noon's second novel, *POLLEN*, is due out from Ringpull on 21 October.

Christopher Evans picked up the BSFA Award for best novel at Sou'Wester at Easter for his alternate universe novel, *AZTEC CENTURY*. The best short fiction award went to "The Ragthorn" by Robert Holdstock and Garry Kilworth, Jim Burn's cover for Paul McAuley's *RED DUST* was named best artwork and a special award was presented by the BSFA committee to the second edition of *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION* edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION also received the Eastercon Award for best long text. The award for best short text went to Eric Brown's "The Time-Lapsed Man", best artwork went to Stephen Briggs and Terry Pratchett's *THE STREETS OF AKNH-MORPORK*, best dramatic presentation Malcolm Sutherland's adaptation of Iain Bank's *THE WASP FACTORY*.

Dave Mooring's "Contemplation" won the first Phlosque Award (for "cute artwork with significance"). Tim Broadribb picked up the Doc Weir Award and Barbara Mascetti received the Ken McIntyre Ward for the wedding invitation she designed for Gary and Linda Stratman.

Jack Womack's *ELVISSEY* and John M Ford's *GROWING UP WEIGHTLESS* tied as winners of the Philip K Dick Award for best original paperback. The other nominees were: *BUNCH!* by David R Bunch, *CRASH COURSE* by Wilhelmina Baird and *ICARUS DESCENDING* by Elizabeth Hand.

The judges were Joan Gordon, Phyllis Gottlieb, Jonathan Lethem, Dave Smith and Sarah Smith. The award administrators are David G Hartwell, Gordon Van Gelder and David A Smith.

The award, sponsored by the Philadelphia

SF Society, the Northwest SF Society and Norwescon, includes a citation and a cash grant. The awards were presented at Norwescon 17 in Seattle in April.

The 1994 Hugo Awards Nominations are: Best novel *MOVING MARS* by Greg Bear (Tor), *GLORY SEASON* by David Brin (Bantam Spectra), *VIRTUAL LIGHT* by William Gibson (Bantam Spectra), *BEGGARS IN SPAIN* by Nancy Kress (Morrow AvoNova), *GREEN MARS* by Kim Stanley Robinson (HarperCollins UK, Bantam Spectra USA). Best Novella "The Night We Buried Road Dog" by Jack Cady (*FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION* January 1993), *MEFISTO IN ONYX* by Harlan Ellison (*OMNI* October 1993, Mark V Ziesing), "An American Childhood" by Pat Murphy (*ASIMOV'S* April 1993), "Into the Miranda Rift" by G David Nordley (*ANALOG* July 1993), "Down in the Bottomlands" by Harry Turtledove (*ANALOG* January 1993), *WALL, STONE, CRAFT* by Walter Jon Williams (Axolotl, *F&SF* October/November 1993). Best novelette "The Shadow Knows" by Terry Bisson (*ASIMOV'S* September 1993, *BEARS DISCOVER FIRE*), "The Franchise" by John Kessel (*ASIMOV'S* August 1993), "Dancing on Air" by Nancy Kress (*ASIMOV'S* July 1993), "Georgia on My Mind" by Charles Sheffield (*ANALOG* January 1993), "Deep Eddy" by Bruce Sterling (*ASIMOV'S* August 1993). Best short story "England Underway" by Terry Bisson (*OMNI* July 1993, *BEARS DISCOVER FIRE*), "The Good Pup" by Bridget McKenna (*F&SF* March 1993), "Mwalimu in the Squared Circle" by Mike Resnick (*ASIMOV'S* March 1993, *ALTERNATE WARRIORS*), "The Story So Far" by Martha Soukup (*FULL SPECTRUM* 4), "Death on the Nile" by Connie Willis (*ASIMOV'S* March 1993). Best non-fiction book *ONCE AROUND THE BLOCH: AN UNAUTHORIZED AUTOBIOGRAPHY* by Robert Bloch (Tor), *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION* edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls (Orbit, St Martin's), *PITFCS: PROCEEDINGS OF THE INSTITUTE FOR TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY STUDIES* edited by Theodore R Cogswell (Advent), *UNDERSTANDING COMICS: THE INVISIBLE ART* by Scott McCloud (Tundra), *THE ART OF MICHAEL WHELAN: SCENES/VISIONS* by Michael Whelan (Bantam Spectra). Best professional artist Thomas Canty, David Cherry, Bog Eggleton, Don Maitz, Michael Whelan. Best professional editor Ellen Datlow, Gardner Dozois, Mike Resnick, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Stanley Schmidt. Best original artwork Thomas Canty's cover for "The Little Things" (*F&SF* October/November 1993, Stephen Hickman for Space Fantasy Commemorative Stamp Booklet (US Postal Service), Keith Parkinson's cover for "Cold Iron" (*ASIMOV'S* November 1993). Best semi-prozine *INTERZONE*, *LOCUS*, *NEW YORK*

REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION, PULPHOUSE, SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE, TOMORROW: SPECULATIVE FICTION. Best dramatic presentation *ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES, BABYLON 5: THE GATHERING, GROUNDHOG DAY, JURASSIC PARK, THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS.* Best fan artist Brad W Foster, Teddy Harvia, Linda Michaels, Peggy Ranson, William Rotsler, Stu Shiffman. Best fanzine *ANSIBLE, FILE 770, LAN'S LANTERN, MIMOSA, STET.* Best fan writer Sharon Farber, Mike Glycer, Andy Hooper, Dave Langford, Evelyn C Leeper.

The final ballots will be sent to members of this year's worldcon, ConAdian, this month. Completed ballots must be postmarked by 31 July and received by 6 August.

BABYLON 5 started screening on Channel 4 at 6pm on Monday 16 May. The series is set on a vast space station, Babylon 5, in the year 2257. The station serves as neutral territory for the dominant species of the galaxy.

George Peppard died on 8 May, aged 65. Although best known in recent years for the 1980s tv series *THE A-TEAM* he also appeared in *THE GROUNDSTAR CONSPIRACY* (a tough thriller with sf undertones) and *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS* (the sf-tilted remake of *THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN*, itself a remake of *THE SEVEN SAMURAI*).

Patsy Dalton died on 6 April, aged 75. First female chair of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. She worked as a continuity girl before entering journalism and also wrote short stories.

August sees the release of *THE DISCWORLD COMPANION*, billed by Gollancz as the "definitive guide" to Terry Pratchett's oddball universe. Written by Pratchett and Stephen Briggs, who recently produced *THE STREETS OF ANKH-MORPORK* for Corgi, the 288-page hardback is heavily illustrated and will cost £15.99.

Pratchett's sixteenth "Discworld" novel is *SOUL MUSIC*, £14.99 from Gollancz in May. His earlier novels *STRATA* and *THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN*, previously available only in paperback, will be re-issued on 28 April as Doubleday hardbacks, £14.99 each, whilst the Writers' Guild Award-winning *JOHNNY AND THE DEAD* was released as a Corgi paperback on 3 March, priced £3.99.

Ecological concerns and political satire are combined in Robert Silverberg's *HOT SKY AT MIDNIGHT*, due out in May as a £14.99 hardback from HarperCollins. The novel is set

aboard Valparaiso Nuevo, a satellite world located in L-5 orbit above an Earth mortally wounded by pollution and corruption.

The British government plans to extend authors' copyright from the current 50 years, following a European directive last October instructing all member states to set a 70-year limit by 1 July 1995. The Trade Minister, Lord Strathclyde, made the announcement via a written reply in the House of Lords on 28 March.

Hodder & Stoughton's May releases include SOLIS, the latest sf hardcover from A A Attanasio, who received a Nebula Award nomination in 1981 for his debut novel, RADIX, and a World Fantasy Award nomination in 1992 for HUNTING THE GHOST DANCER.

Stephen Gallagher is reported to have turned in the manuscript of his new novel RED ROBIN, RED ROBIN to his agent, with an anticipated autumn UK publication.

Two of Terry Pratchett's pre-"Discworld" novels were re-released in hardback by Doubleday on 28 April, priced £14.99 each. THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN (1976) and STRATA (1981), both originally published by Colin Smythe Ltd, were first issued in paperback by New English Library and enjoyed a second paperback release from Corgi in 1988, following the success of the "Discworld" sequence.

THE SHIPS OF MERIOR, the second novel in Janny Wurts' "Wars of Light and Shadows" series, is out from HarperCollins in May, both as a £14.99 hardback and an £8.99 trade paperback. Wurts' other novels include the "Cycle of Fire" trilogy and, with Raymond E Feist, the "Empire" fantasies.

Feist himself appears on HarperCollins' June schedule, with the mystical fantasy SHADOW OF A DARK QUEEN, a £14.99 hardback. He's joined by Katharine Kerr's A TIME OF JUSTICE (£14.99, £8.99), continuing the "Days of Air and Darkness" sequence set within her Celtic "Westlands" cycle.

Latest addition to the growing ranks of horror movie fanzines devoted to the genre's "golden age": CRIMSON HEROES, with a tribute to Vincent Price, an overview of BBC2's recent season of double bills (hosted by "Dr Terror") and a Mummy filmography.

Copies are available from editor Paul Durkan at 67 Dryden Road, Scunthorpe, South Humberside, DN17 1PP, at £2.25 each.

BOOK REVIEWS

NORTH WIND by Gwyneth Jones
Gollancz, 281 pp, £15.99, h/b

Reviewed by Martin Tudor.

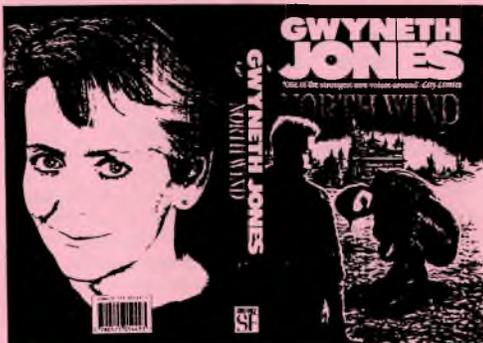
WHITE QUEEN detailed the initial effects on the people of Earth of their first contact with the alien Aleutians. It was a fascinating, weird and moving novel which told the bizarre tale of an inter-species love triangle between the alien poet Clavel the Compassionate, down-and-out journalist Johnny Guglioli and top multi-media correspondent Braemar Wilson.

Clavel loved Johnny, Johnny loved Braemar and Braemar hated the Aleutians. Against the background of a world trying desperately to come to terms with this alien "invasion" we watched Clavel's attempted seduction and ultimately his/her rape of Johnny. We were caught up in the desperation of Johnny and Braemar's subsequent search for and attempted destruction of the Aleutian mothership, via the Faster Than Light Device developed by German physicist Peenemunde Buonarotti, which climaxed with the trial and execution of Johnny Guglioli.

NORTH WIND is set around a hundred years later. The Aleutians are still on Earth, but Johnny's tragic tale is all but forgotten by the people of Earth. An increasingly destructive "war of the sexes" is being fought. This is no longer a catch-phrase it is now a very real war between the various male/female dominated countries.

The Aleutian traders, despite ever-increasing anti-Aleutian feelings on the part of both sides, are conducting business as usual. But this uneasy truce between the aliens and humanity is finally taxed to breaking point by the Aleutian's latest scheme - to level the Himalayas... Such is the outcry against this scheme that the warring male and female factions briefly unite to (temporarily) eject the Aleutians from Earth.

Jones invokes in this two novels a sense of the "alien" unsurpassed by any other writer I have encountered. The Aleutians are, in a peculiar way,



immortal; each one of them is "re-born" after death inheriting all the memories and experiences of their previous incarnations. They exhibit both male and female characteristics and can (seemingly at will) play either sexual role, which renders them to human eyes effectively genderless; this of course provides a bizarre counterpoint to humanity's "war of the sexes". They are (almost) telepathic; as everyone one of them has known everyone else in an infinite number of incarnations and seen everyone else reacting to an infinite number of situations they know what everyone else is likely to do and/or say. This knowledge seems to have developed into a strange "group mind"/"shared private universe" wherein they seem to communicate. This combined with their knowledge of the "Common Tongue" (a very highly developed understanding of and ability to use body language) amounts to telepathy as far as most humans are concerned.

Naturally, given these factors the Aleutians cannot see why the humans are upset about the "temporary" climatic chaos (only a generation or two) that the levelling of the Himalayas will cause. Surely the eventual climatic benefits by far out weigh a temporary inconvenience? The main impediment to their understanding of humanity is the fact that the majority of Aleutians simply don't believe that humans die - not "true-death" anyway. They're convinced that the whole concept is either as bizarre hoax the humans are trying to perpetrate or that the humans are just so culturally retarded they don't understand the facts of life and death.

It is against this fascinating and tumultuous background that Jones again attempts to tell a love story. This time between the "half-caste" (Aleutian lover) Sidney Carton and the disabled alien librarian Bella. The love story is further complicated by the mystery over Bella's true identity: Is he/she the reincarnation of Johnny Guglioli? Or is she/he Clavel's "true-child"? Or both? Or neither? Whatever her real identity a lot of people, humans and Aleutians, seem to think she/he knows something about Buonarotti's mythical FTL device.

Part thriller, as the various factions race to capture the FTL device if it exists, part love story, and a totally fascinating "first contact" story, this taut, exciting, complex novel cannot be too highly recommended... But I'd advise you to read *WHITE QUEEN* first.

ELVISSEY by Jack Womack
HarperCollins, 319 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Robert P Jones.

The fourth and longest novel in a recently completed quintet, this concerns the abduction of Elvis Presley from an alternate time line. What precisely Dryco, the sinister multi-national dominating Womack's comfortless near future, hope to gain by pulling off this astonishing technological coup I'm not sure I

can tell you for, in truth, I found much of this ambitious, but uneven, book sketchy and undermotivated. As in his previous work, Womack shows plenty of energy but little taste or control; a potential treat ends up an unfocused, vaguely distasteful melodrama.

A pity, because there are good things here. The curiously formal speech of the narrator, Isabel, is surprisingly well sustained, and Womack does at least as effective a hatchet job on the King's personality as Peter Shaffer did on Mozart's in *AMADEUS*. This is Elvis as I'm quite prepared to believe he was - bigoted, inarticulate, and very dim. Yet, sadly, the author seems to lose interest in this almost immediately and, with typical lack of concentration, neglects to seize the wonderful satiric opportunities provided by the Elvis cult - the supposedly vast and influential Church of Elvis - not one of whose members actually appears as a character.

This is symptomatic of a fictional world whose settings and internal workings carry remarkably little conviction. Even the enjoyable tour of 21st century London pales in comparison with William Gibson's stunning evocation of the same city in his incomparably finer *MONA LISA OVERDRIVE*.

Finally, I might mention an uncomfortably sneering tone in *ELVISSEY*'s implied attitude to popular culture, whether in music, religion or literature. (The moronic Elvis, for example, is addicted to pulp 50s sci-fi comics.) One puts up with this sort of thing in Henry James or Virginia Woolf, but it is irritating in a genre writer who has not yet mastered his craft where others, less pretentious than himself, have.

STAR WRECK V THE UNDISCOVERED NURSING HOME

by Leah Rewolinski
Boxtree, 149 pp, £3.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

A rather slim and very silly parody of the *STAR TREK* series including *TNG* and, new to this volume, *DS9*. You will have to have watched some, if not all of the three varieties of *STAR TREK* to understand the in-jokes that this series has in liberal measure.

In this volume Captain Smirk and his crew have been summarily retired to the Vacant Attic Nursing Home, very much against their will. They hijack their USS Endocrine and leg it to the Fountain of Youth, found at the end of volume IV. Captain Jean-Lucy Ricardo and his crew are sent after the renegades when it becomes clear that they have taken

back the Fountain of Youth from the Romanumens.

When they arrive at the planet Smirk refuses to surrender so Ricardo sends Deanna Troit down to him, she drinks some of the Youth water, becomes 15 years old and in love with Smirk again. Smirk has also built a funfair around the Fountain and is raking in the money. When Starfreak find this out they send Bungeeman Crisco to sort the mess out and retire Smirk and his crew to the nursing home. But Crisco gets the crews mixed up and sends Ricardo and company to the nursing home, so who will sort this one out?

HIGH HUNT by David Eddings

HarperCollins, 340 pp, £15.99 h/b, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Clive Richards.

David Eddings is probably better known for his fantasy epics, such as *THE BELGARIAD*, *THE MALLOREAN*, *THE ELENIUM* and *THE TAMULI*. *HIGH HUNT*, his first novel, was originally published in the USA in 1973, and is now published in the UK for the first time.

The story centres around Dan Alders, an ex-GI recently returned from Germany, and is told in a narrative sense. Accordingly we are led into a lot of intrigue through his observations as he tries to adapt back into civilian life. Like the film *THE DEER HUNTER*, the main plot is the build-up to a hunting trip in the high country, the subsequent events that occur when a bunch of people live together in close proximity.

There is Dan's brother Jack, a loser who staggers through life between marriages and jobs; McKlearey, a lunatic tough ex-marine with a secret past; Cal, a big-shot wheeler-dealer who come from nowhere to be very wealthy, and who finances all the parties, drink and women for the group; and finally mild, hen-pecked, easy going Stan.

It is a fairly typical story, while planning the hunt they have all been held together by a mutual taste for adventure and beer, but once out in the wilds all the prejudices and competitiveness comes together in an explosive way, and one doesn't know who is more at risk, the deer or the men themselves.

It is a good story and I enjoyed it. It is easy to read, but I must admit that the plot is fairly transparent. There were times when I really felt I was there, amidst all the fantastic scenery and the emotions, and there were times when I was mildly bored.

In any event, if you want something different from the fantasy/sf genre, *HIGH HUNT* is a good story and I think you'll enjoy it.

RAMA REVEALED by Arthur C Clarke + Gentry Lee
Gollancz, 477 pp, £15.99, h/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

The third and final episode in Clarke's entertaining trilogy which began with *RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA* in 1973. As with recent books Clarke's collaborator, Gentry Lee, provides large parts of the story and again goes in for volume rather than content. The classic Clarke novels have a unique style and finesse that (all of?) his partnerships lack.

The story itself, while revealing a few of the secrets (promised often but only providing further questions) flies off at a tangent with sub-plots about the humans on Rama. These largely concern Nicole and Richard, and their contact/relations with other species aboard the ship. This in itself gives additional details and explanation of the Rama vessel, while also telling of other aliens' experiences on the craft. Here, the octospiders' story, and their interaction with the renegade humans, furnished the novel with a promising aside. The way in which each side reacts initially, and the friendships that grow between the two races, are well handled and described.

We also learn of the Eagle and the Node, but not really enough to satisfy. There is also an explanation of evolution in the galaxy but this proved too brief, and was the writer making a point for the story rather than a supposition of life. The overall feel of the book, regrettably, is of them getting it finished and out of the way, and as such it disappoints. The original (for me) held a potential and positive belief that has failed to carry through the three volumes. While providing some excellent moments this last episode left a feeling of something missing and of its falling short of its potential. The focusing on the humans' woes and in-fighting rather than the wonders around them does make one consider Clarke/Lee's view of humanity - would we go through such crises and political shenanigans, ignoring the universe we sailed through because of everyday life? Or is this ape able to change?

ACHILLES CHOICE by Larry Niven & Stephen Barnes

Illustrated by Boris Vallejo
Pan, 214 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

Achilles was offered the choice of a short and glorious life or a long, dull one. In this story the same choice is offered to

athletes competing in a new kind of Olympics where they must excel in intellectual and artistic pursuits - one of each - as well as sport. To win they need to take BOOST, a surgical/neurological procedure which enhances every aspect of their physical and mental performances. The downside for losers is that their boost treatment leads to physical breakdown and early death - only winners are rewarded by admission to Earth's ruling elite, which means being linked to a computer monitoring network which will keep them alive and perfect indefinitely.

The story follows the progress of Jillian Shomer, who thinks she can win without boost but, after nearly leaving it too late, finds that she has to take it like everybody else. She triumphs (of course) only to learn that the eventual price of winning may be higher than she realised.

By that time, she has also learned the unsuspected secret of how the world is being run, and by whom. The problem is that the human race may be ceasing to be human and, because the change is originating from the top, it may be unstoppable. However, a computer entity called Saturn has recognised something special in Jillian and there is hope that she will be able to do something to safeguard the future.

I know that many people do not rate Larry Niven as an sf author, but I do. Ably assisted by Stephen Barnes he has produced here another well-written and thought provoking book. It is a good story, enhanced by Boris' illustrations, and it has something to say about the perils of an idea (computer linking direct to the brain) which others have presented as only beneficial.

I recommend it.

INDIA'S STORY by Kathlyn S Starbuck
HarperCollins, 338 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Robert P Jones.

Starbuck is a mysterious and charismatic character in Herman Melville's *MOBY DICK*. Mrs Raymond E Feist, who writes under this name, has here produced a self-proclaiming "virtual reality psychic sf thriller" that is desperately short on charisma whilst offering only the kind of mystery it is hard to care about.

In essence, this is a therapeutic suspense novel of a familiar kind. the beautiful but repressed India is an amnesiac with psychokinetic powers, sent to a special retreat "between dimensions" where she is treated by homely holistic healer, Anara. Someone is after her because of something she (and I)

can't remember, and her life is possibly in danger. Also her spiritual being, constantly under attack from hoards of spooky miasmic entities - or should I say "non-entities" - known as "the disembodied". Fortunately a luxurious swimming pool and a nice young man - at least, she thinks he's nice - are on hand to provide her with idyllic interludes between dyspeptic inter-dimensional chases. All ends happily, with our charming heroine a wiser and more personable person.

Drivel, I'm afraid. sf only by virtue of being needlessly set in some feebly imagined future. Starbuck can hardly be said to have lavished much thought on it. From the title onwards everything courts anonymity in a book that is sluggish, uninvolved and inconsequential, padded out with stilted dialogue, nauseating New Age sentimentality, and psychological mumbo-jumbo that must have C G Jung revolving rapidly in his grave.

Actually, INDIA'S STORY is so mediocre it's hard to get cross at. there is something rather endearing about a writer who thinks she can stop at describing one of her major characters as "a pretty blonde girl", and the prose, though quite undistinguished, is at least not purple. (Indeed, it lacks colour of any hue.) I suspect many sensitive adolescents of both sexes scribble away at consoling fantasies like this. Few, however, complete them at such length, and fewer still manage somehow to see them published.

ECHOES OF FLAME by Jonathan Wylie
Corgi, 432 pp, £4.99 p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

After the battle that freed the Islanders from the tyranny of the Xantic Empire, Dsordas finds himself titular leader, albeit unwillingly, of the island. But the people of Zalys were not as successful as they hoped, as one of Marshal Farag's farspeakers escaped initial capture and warned the Empire of the islanders' uprising. Thus, Dsordas has to oversee the repairs and rehousing, as well as martial the island's defences against the fleet that he knows the Empire will send, not only to ensure the continuation of the amberine crystal supply, but in revenge. However, the fleet never arrives, only the rumour of it being destroyed by some sort of mysterious sea creatures. These creatures turn out to be giant mantarays that have somehow been given the power of flight. They begin attacking the island, killing people and destroying property. Dsordas, Fen and Gaye decide to travel to the

capital, Xantium, to ensure that another fleet will not be sent against the island and also to discover the whereabouts of, and maybe to try to rescue, the hostages taken by Chancellor Verkho.

Bowen, who was taken hostage in book one, arrives in Xantium along with the mysterious package for Chancellor Verkho. This is some sort of talisman which, if Verkho can command it, will give him immortality and unlimited magical powers. But this talisman is surrounded by many puzzles which require cunning and sacrifice to solve. One such puzzle requires a woman to be sacrificed, so Verkho sets up a public gambling contest with his opponent to stake the life of a woman and his stake will be any boon in his power to give. Dsordas and party arrive in the city just as the contest has been announced. He enters the game and, unwillingly, stakes Fen's life, with the release of the hostages as his boon. Will Verkho win and Fen die? Or will the hostages be released and Verkho's bid for power stopped?

The second volume in Wylie's best series to date carries on with the same high standard of the first, it does not fall into the "middle volume blues" as with some trilogies. It keeps the pace the first volume had going, with tightly written plot and excellent characterisation that are the hallmarks of all Wylie's work. I found the book unputdownable and urge you to read this trilogy even if you've not read Wylie before.

GREYBEARD by Brian Aldiss
RoC, 207 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Robert P Jones.

This is a revised edition of Aldiss' 1964 novel. Having - to my shame - never read the original, I can't tell you in what way he's revised it, although he doesn't appear to have pushed its time setting further into the future. He doesn't need to. If the early 80s were not marked by the specific ecological catastrophe described here, recent disclosures about the falling human sperm-count still give this marvellous depiction of a world without children a pointed freshness.

The book deals directly with extremely emotive issues but is never sentimental or cheaply manipulative. Few writers in any genre have detailed the slide from late maturity into middle-age with such precision and subtlety, or caught so exactly the sense of consolation children can represent to the generation of their parents.

The prose is plainer and less self-

consciously stylish than in some of the author's other novels, but none the worse for that. The glories of the English countryside are beautifully evoked; the characterisation of its ageing and increasingly deranged inhabitants colourful and shrewd. The relationship between the eponymous Greybeard and his quiet, intelligent wife, Martha, is touching and true. Aldiss takes considerable risks by incorporating frequent flashbacks and shifts of location, but these genuinely enrich the narrative's texture without disrupting its tautly controlled pace.

Why, then, have Penguin reissued this superb book as though they were ashamed of it? Like too many items in their RoC sf imprint this edition is unattractively designed, poorly printed in microscopic type, and carries misleading blurb on its tackily designed cover. Is *GREYBEARD* so much lesser a work than P D James' somewhat similar *CHILDREN OF MEN* (handsomely packaged by Penguin), or the 70s novels of J G Ballard (strikingly rejacketed by Harper Collins)? Surely, at a time when young writers like Neal Stephenson and Jack Womack are turning out showy but hollow novels, the quiet, old-fashioned virtues of Aldiss' minor masterpiece are all the more to be cherished.

THE WRECKS OF TIME by Michael Moorcock
RoC, 192 pp, £4.99 p/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

This re-issue of *THE RITUALS OF INFINITY* under a new name is typical sixties Moorcock. The story revolves around the existence of parallel Earths, occupying different subspecial levels, and the battles by the hero, Professor Faustaff and his team, who try to save the alternate Earths from destruction by the D-squads.

As the story begins the last fifteen earths are under attack from the D-squads through random raids, setting up Unstable Matter Situations that, if allowed to peak, would destroy the planet. To counteract this Faustaff's side use adjusters to neutralise the UMSs, but these are scarce and both expensive and time consuming to build or repair - hence the crucial situation.

Faustaff, through several adventures, brings the whole scenario to a climax which involves the mysterious Principles who appear as a third side in the conflict - and a very powerful one. As I am sure most readers will know the story finishes in an amiable way, somewhat failing to live up to expectations, but this became usual in sixties sf, and the love/peace stuff has worn very thin.

CAPTAINS' LOGS SUPPLEMENTAL by Mark A Altman
Boxtree, 125 pp, £9.99, b/w photos

THE DEEP SPACE LOG BOOK

by Mark A Altman + Edward Gross
Boxtree, 110 pp, £9.99, b/w photos

Reviewed by David B Wake.

The problem with this review is that I knew exactly what my opinion was going to be before I read the books. Nothing I've read has changed that. The review is the same as the one I did for the last *STAR TREK* book really, but "O.K." seems such a bland comment.

The titles describe the books completely, other than that they are big glossy format containing a variety of black and white photos of the people involved (a majority of them in mufti, photographed at conventions). The text sums up the various episodes briefly, containing: The 6th season of *TNG*, from "Time's Arrow, part II" to "Descent" - possibly the best season ever; and the first season of *DS9*, from "Emissary" to "In the Hands of the Prophet".

There is also waffle, with mildly interesting anecdotes from cast and crew, directors and writers, and Uncle Tom Cobby. Whereas *TNG* has just an overview, the anecdotes from *DS9* are popped into chapters with such titles as "Get Thee to the Gamma Quadrant", "Singing the Sound Stage Blues" and "The Next Generation in Deep Space".

I'm not sure whether I'd buy either, but they look good on the shelf, and might be useful for reference purposes. If you are a *STAR TREK* fan (as I am), then I'd say "Yes, if you want", and if you aren't, then you've probably skipped this review anyway.

NOMANSLAND by D G Compton
Gollancz, 286 pp, £4.99, "C" format

Reviewed by Robert P Jones.

There is a truly superb and shocking moment in this book, which I am not going to give away. Sadly, however, it occurs in the first chapter, and everything else in Compton's first novel for ten years disappoints.

The basic scenario bears a certain resemblance to that of Aldiss' recently reissued *GREYBEARD*, though its treatment and emphasis are quite different. In the near future, a curious medical syndrome drastically affects the production of male embryos so that, within a generation, men and, shortly thereafter, women are doomed to extinction. Compton is chiefly concerned with the sexual politics of this situation - male violence towards women, increased public tolerance of lesbianism etc -

but these are fairly thin and obviously dramatised, almost as though the writer had lost his feel for the genre.

Yet, if the background is wobbly, even more so is the plot, in which noble medical researcher Dr Harriet Ryder struggles against corrupt authority to publish results that may lead to a cure for the syndrome. The narrative chops awkwardly between Harriet's first person and third person flashbacks chronicling her brother Danny's metamorphosis into an embittered misogynist serial killer. Psychologically this is all pretty unconvincing and, despite effective touches of violence, pretty lacking in tension. There is an extraordinary scantness of hard scientific detail and the climax is tired, bungled stuff.

Worst of all, Harriet is a heroine almost out of Enid Blyton. Her dedication to medicine derives, we discover, from an idealistic school-girl vow to rid the nasty world of its horrid plagues, and her stiff-upper-lipped pursuit of justice is interspersed with innumerable hearty high teas.

This is precisely the kind of book that J G Ballard once dubbed "cosy catastrophe", complete with wildly optimistic ending, and good clear prose is not enough to save it. It is a sad indicator of declining powers that Compton - once so bracingly intelligent a writer - should have produced something which, though set in the future, often feels as though it is taking place in the past.

NURSERY TALE by T M Wright
Gollancz, 288 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Bernie Evans.

This novel opens with a preface in which a young couple are burned to death in a fire which totally destroys their 100 year old farmhouse home. Then in the first chapter a young boy, out walking with his grandfather in the same area, is struck dumb by the horror of something he sees whilst he is momentarily separated from the old man. Next we are shown two newspaper articles, respectively two years after and one year after the incident with the child, from which we learn that a truck driver working for a construction company is injured in a crash, and that planning permission was given for a housing development in the area.

The narrative jumps around confusingly between the incident with the fire, the one with the child, various newspaper articles, and what is happening "now", to the families who have moved into the first few completed homes in the development. Normally this

narrative style aids in building up suspense whilst at the same time slowly revealing the dreadful incident in the past which led to the present horror. In this instance, however, it merely serves to confuse matters, as it jumps around too much, and events are dated "two years after such-and-such event", whilst that event is also similarly identified, causing the reader much back-tracking to identify just which time he is currently reading about.

This is a shame, because the early pages promised much, but the novel ultimately fails to deliver. There is a dead child somewhere, but when and where is never explained, nor the manner of the child's death. There are a number of child ghosts, but their genesis is not explained, and the nursery of the title never materialises.

The climax is suitably horrific, as befits this kind of novel, but is, telegraphed so much in advance it evinces neither shock nor surprise but, for me anyway, frustration and disappointment. And the final paragraph is so clichéd as to be a waste of the paper it was printed on.

MERMAIDS AND MAGIC SHOWS: THE PAINTINGS OF

DAVID DELAMARE

Text by Nigel Suckling

Paper Tiger, 128 pp, £10.95, limpback artbook

Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

I must admit that I had not come across the name or work of David Delamare before this book appeared. It seems that he was born in Leicester, but moved to the US when he was three. He opened a graphics studio with a partner in 1980, which was burned down a few years later; since then he has kept transparencies of all his work - hence this book.

He first painted mermaids in 1980, as a mural for a restaurant, and many more have followed. He works from models - notably his girlfriend (who probably doesn't have a tail); occasionally a stranger whom he meets on the street. Can you imagine that as a pick-up line? He also uses photographs as reference.

What is interesting is that he developed a mer-world of his own as he went along. His paintings are realistic yet with surrealistic, dreamlike qualities which befit the subject matter. Sometimes there are shades of Dali or Magritte. But this is not just a book full of mermaids: Delamare also produced, as book illustrations, a series of anthropomorphised animals, quite stylised, very good of their type. And there are other treats in store. In short, another Paper Tiger book for the shelves of the fantasy-art lover, and not a dragon or wizard in sight.

THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN by Terry Pratchett
Doubleday, 191 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

Another book from Pratchett, this time a hardback reissue from 1976. In this the hero is Dom Salabos, heir to a fortune, but sufficiently bored to risk adventure. He is thrown into the adventure via probability math, an unusual assassin and "the Bank", all of which point to Dom as the discoverer of the mythical Jokers World. Now, the Jokers are the race assumed to be gods who, through great powers, evolved the other races and, on growing bored, decided to hide themselves away, only leaving behind high-tech artifacts called Towers, which absorb all energy but are impenetrable.

Out against Dom and his squire allies, are the Jokers Institute, who see any discovery of Joker World as dangerous to the races - their power and technology making slaves of us all. The Institute, through a very lucky robot, Ways, continually intercedes to (try to) kill Dom, and thus to prevent the discovery. The outcome, which is Pratchett's slant on space opera, climaxes as only he can write it.

Entertaining whilst not classic Pratchett, the story gambols along gaining momentum with typically witty asides and pop-up characters filling it out. Pratchett has a way with a story that, even when obvious, turns everything inside out to the end. Some wonderfully zany bits which, interspaced with pun, witticism and straight plot, provide a delightful read.

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**A NOTE FROM THE
REVIEWS EDITOR**

The book reviews are almost up to date, well done all those who've made the effort to catch up. We're still missing one or two reviews, but I'm sure I'll get those by this month's meeting, won't I?

Due to this spate of catching up that you've all been doing, we've had so many reviews that I've had to hold some over for next month, just like the good old days. PLEASE, now we've got to this happy state, keep it up. As I've said so many times in the past, the more up to date we are the happier the publishers are, and the more books we'll get to review. Thanks again - Bernie Evans