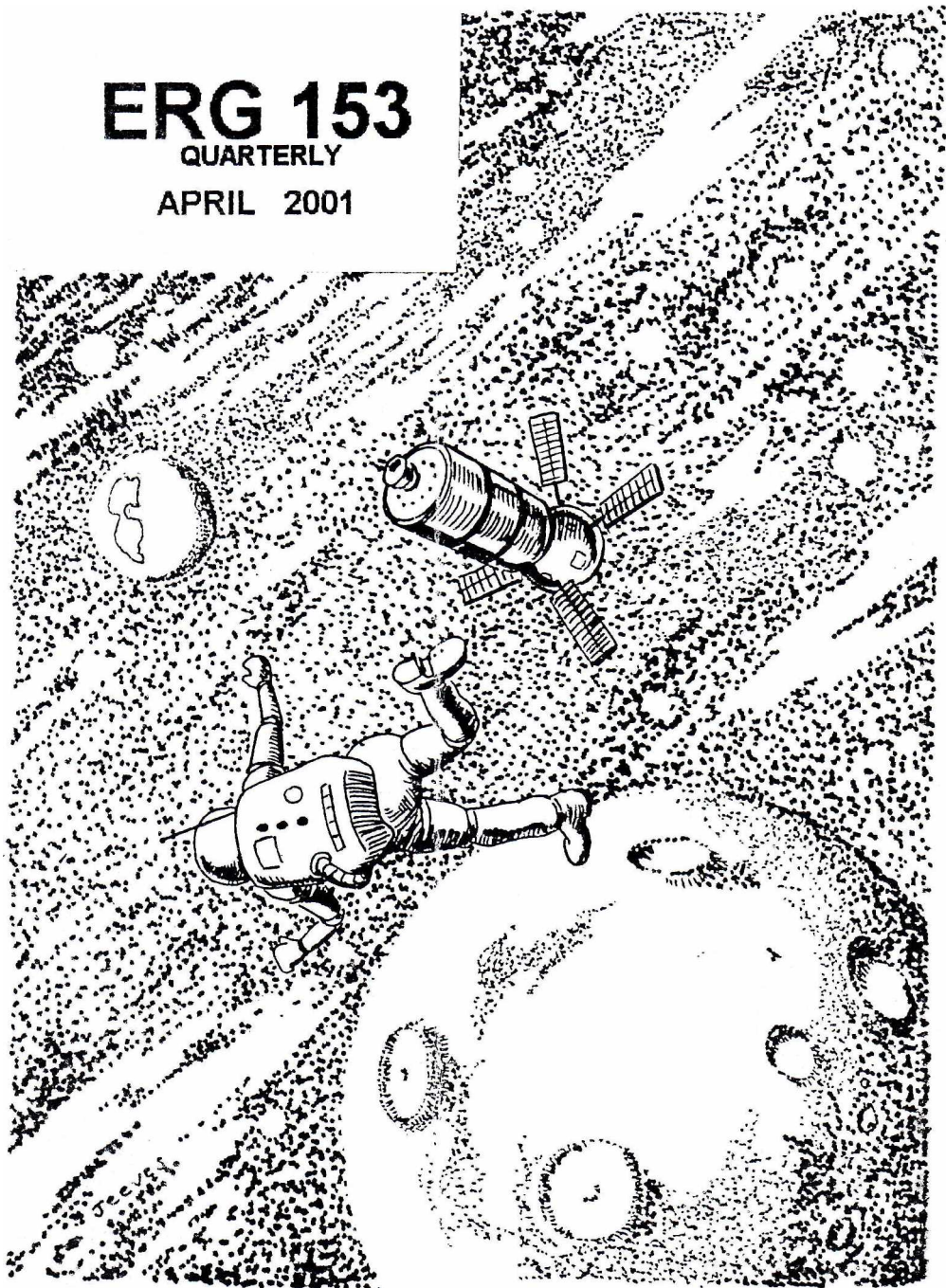


# ERG 153

QUARTERLY

APRIL 2001



## ERG 153

APRIL 2001

42nd. Anniversary Issue

Greetings ERGbods,

Funny how the years roll around

and here we are clocking up another annish for ERG. Once again I considered increasing the page count, but when I worked out the sums, not only would printing costs have been higher, but the increased postal rates would have meant that by adding a measly four pages, I would have doubled the cost of an issue. It just wasn't on folks. However I would like to thank all those kind readers who have sent me American stamps and magazines. I am now onto my fourth album of USA stamps.

Only a few days after completing ERG 152, my monitor broke down. Now how does one power down a PC when you can't see what is going on? Call out cost £40, repair £20 and VAT £7.50, so the little episode set me back £67.50. Ouch!

Still selling stuff. Anyone want to buy nine copies of ASF from 1935? Write for details and prices. Also the first 23 issues of IASFM in mint condition and GALAXY NOVELS 1 to 28 and 30 & 31. Any offers?

**ASTOUNDING SF 1935 issues** General condition bearing age in mind. F = Fair, G = Good, VG = Very Good, TE = Trimmed edges, ST = Spine Sellotaped. Where an issue is not VG, damage as noted is confined mainly to cover. All text pages are Good. Prices are £Sterling/\$USA. If ordering, send no cash until you get the mags. JAN Bacoover and 6 pages of Brass Tacks have 1" by 2" crumbled away text OK.

ST TE £10.00/\$16.00

FEB VG ST TE £15.00/\$22.00

MAY F Spine poor, cover has 1" tear, bacoover and Brass Tacks have pieces torn out and page 43/44 is missing. Reading copy £7.00/\$11.00

JUN F ST 1" of tape down insides of covers £8.00/\$12.00

JLY F ST 1" by 2" piece off front cover £8.00/\$12.00

SEP VG ST 1" reinforcing strip inside front cover £15.00/\$22.00

OCT G ST 1" by 2" bit off cover £10.00/\$16.00

NOV VG ST Sticker label removal on cover leaves 1"x2" marking £15.00/\$22.00

DEC G 1" torn off front cover, top has 2" of tape £10.00/\$16.00

Sold singly, or all nine for £80.00/\$140.00 post paid

Also on offer, INTERNATIONAL SF, the only two issues. SF GREATS, etc 1 to 15, 117, 18, 19. ORBIT SF, set of five ORIGINAL SF, run of 11. SATURN SF, set of 5. And many other SF digest mags of the fifties/sixties, plus mre recent hardovers. Send me your want list

Which is all the ERG natter for this issue. I look forward to hearing from you all and maybe getting rid of some of my collection. All the best, Terry

Terry Jeeves

56 Red Scar Drive

Scarborough YO12 5RQ

If you would like the next issue, all you have to do is to respond to this one - e-mail: [erg40@madmenish.com](mailto:erg40@madmenish.com)

DOWN MEMORY BANK LANE Part 17

# Aliens & Monsters



In case the title of this instalment seems a bit ambiguous, maybe a bit of explanation will sort things out. Aliens can be monsters and vice versa, it all depends on the point of view. For convenience, let's say that for this piece, aliens look like monsters but have intelligence whilst monsters are ugly and nasty just for the hell of it.

About the first aliens I can recall were in the pages of Wizard, Rover, Boy's Magazine and the like. One lot (in The Wizard) planted vine seeds which overran everywhere at a high rate of knots. An Olympic Gold Medallist might have got away, but it was hard luck for anyone else. In Boy's Magazine the alien monsters erupted from a lair under Wembley football pitch, thus mucking up a Cup Tie. Aliens were invariably hostile, with most of 'em coming from Mars. They all wanted to take over the world. Nowadays they would probably take one look at it and run back home. Dsuch aliens were as memorable as a British Rail sandwich. Not from Mars, but the equally remote regions of Tibet saw a bunch of monks releasing the 'Worms of Doom', which were termite-like creatures capable of munching on steel as if it were chocolate. They wrecked the regular targets of that era, the Empire State Building, Eiffel Tower and the Houses of Parliament before the hero invented a new variety of DDT and scuppered the lot.

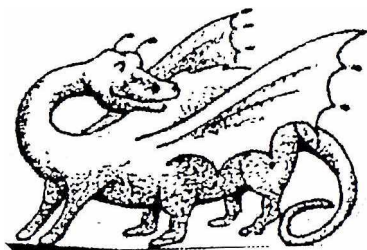
After a surfeit of such creatures, it was a refreshing change to come across Ray Gallun's 'OLD FAITHFUL' in which an aging Martian scientist had made contact radio contact with one on Earth. Having learned a pidgin version of English (It wasn't explained how), he sent the message, "Coming, coming, Man of Mars coming comet omung". He hops aboard a passing comet and travels to Earth. Sadly he didn't survive the trip, but it went down well with the readership. Naturally a sequel followed and with great originality was called, what else but 'SON OF OLD FAITHFUL'. That didn't go down so well, probably they ran out of handy comets.



In the same issue appeared a tale of leech-like aliens who resembled huge protoplasmic slugs and who attached themselves to people's backs and took control of them with world domination in view. No, I am NOT talking about Heinlein's yarn, 'THE PUPPET MASTERS' in a post-war Galaxy, the yarn I have just described was BRAIN LEECHES by Edward S. Mund and appeared in the July 1935 issue of ASF. I often wonder where Heinlein got his idea from.

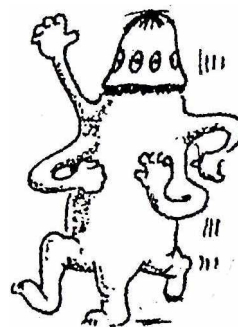
When THRILLING WONDER STORIES appeared in 1936, it bore a cover which included a bulbous-headed alien popping off with a ray gun. It wasn't long before John W. Campbell had a series in the mag dealing with the adventures of Penton and Blake as they roved the Solar System. On Mars they encountered the 'thushol', aliens which could create perfect duplicates of any life form to come along. Two Pentons and two Blakes were faced with the problem of identifying, and destroying, the fakes. One another occasion they were pursued by ambling protoplasm. They couldn't return to Earth as their atomic powered ship had been ostracised by some future CND. Anyone wanting to read the P&B saga should hunt up a copy of ACE Double G-585, THE PLANETEERS, published circa 1966. You get five of their yarns, plus JWC's THE ULTIMATE WEAPON - which first saw print on 1936 as the 2 part serial, UNCERTAINTY. JWC came up with another shape-changing alien in his epic, 'WHO GOES THERE?' in which a deep frozen alien predator is thawed out and goes on the rampage. Sadly, when made into a movie, the alien had been converted into a vegetable - it fair put me off eating salads.

Campbell's rival in the alien creating game, E.E. Doc Smith Phd. was no slouch.



His wheel-men were just two axle connected wheels rolling around and procreating during chance encounters. His Lensman series abounded with aliens and monsters rubbing wings, tentacles and what passed for noses. Worsel was a telepathic dragon timid at first until pairing up with Kim Kinnison, he became a holy terror.

A.E. Van Vogt burst onto the SF scene and created a reputation with his first two stories, BLACK DESTROYER and DISCORD IN SCARLET. The first saw Coeurl, last survivor of his race, boarding an exploring spaceship and bumping of its crew for their 'id' or Potassium. 'Discord' was similar in outline as Ixtl tried to take over and plant her eggs in the crewmen. The film ALIEN was so obviously based on these yarns that it proved lucrative, law-suit wise, for Mr Van Vogt. Other yarns followed and were eventually collected, blended together and published as VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE.



Just before the war, TALES OF WONDER appeared in the UK. It included such yarns as E.F. Russell's PR-E-E-E-T and Beynon's THE PERFECT CREATURE. The latter was a laboratory created creature, meant to be perfect. Multi-legged and eyed, it could see and run in any direction without turning round. The mouth circled the head so it could eat the same. It had boneless tentacular arms and was an omnivore - so it set off after its creator for lunch. However, its perfections didn't include swimming so when it fell in a lake, it drowned.

Even the fantasy slanted UNKNOWN featured some memorable aliens, my favourite being Sturgeon's (?) 'IT'. This delightful creature appeared spontaneously from a mess of rotting woodland humus and assorted fungi wrapped around a long dead body. After dissecting a dog and chasing an infuriating little girl, it fell in a stream and melted away. Another Sturgeon epic was KILLDOZER wherein an energy controlling entity takes over a bulldozer and starts hunting the workers building an island airstrip. This too, made it to the big screen, and amazingly, stuck fairly close to the story.

Treading the borderline of monsterdom were the mutant rats in Chandler's 'GIANT KILLER'. They inhabited the wall spaces in a space ship and emerged to kill off the crew. The yarn earned itself the unofficial title of 'The Rat's Tale'. Hal Clement gave us a variety of aliens; although non-humanoid in shape, their thoughts, motives and actions were very humanlike. Who can forget the amoeba-like detective of NEEDLE, as he tracked down his quarry. Able to ooze into a human body and improve it, his problem was how to find which human the criminal had entered. I'd love to see it on a big screen, it wouldn't require much in the way of special effects but I suspect the lack of ray-guns, robots or spectacular space wars would make it a no-no. Another Clement hero in MISSION OF GRAVITY was the earwig-like creature Bar-Lennan dweller on a high-gravity world and called on to help save a crashed spaceprobe. The same author gave us ICEWORLD which was really Earth which was icy compared with the hot planet from which the alien drug smugglers came.

In a much lighter vein, Damon Knight gave us CABIN BOY, in Galaxy in which an Earth spaceship gets stuck on the outside of an alien craft which then begins to assimilate it as food. The alien cabin boy (who communicates by assorted stinks) has pity on the Earth people and annoys his skipper (who happens to be the alien craft) by causing a horrible stink so causing his skipper to release them involuntarily.

Eric Frank Russell was no slouch at creating aliens, in SINISTER BARRIER, his energy creatures the Vitons nearly conquered the Earth before being thwarted. That's another SF yarn just waiting to hit the big screen. Perhaps my favourite Russell alien appears but briefly in the superb HOBBYIST in which a space scout comes across a

museum of frozen creatures collected by the Creator. EFR also created the touching monster of DEAR DEVIL, the mind parasites of CALL HIM DEAD, the highly evolved human of METAMORPHOSITE not to mention a raft of slightly stupid alien troops in various lighthearted attacks on humanity. He also had the robot Jay Score and the tentacled Martians of MEN, MARTIANS AND MACHINES.

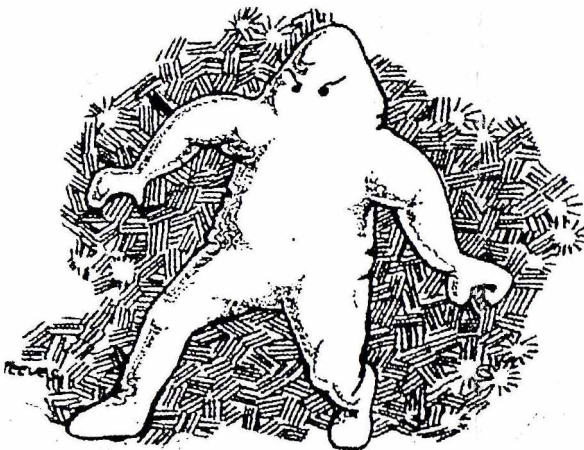
But why, you may ask, have I omitted Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN? Well for two reasons, firstly, her monster was basically human in origin and a spare part assembly job. Secondly, whilst I thoroughly enjoyed the film, I found the book woefully verbose and tedious, so much so I could never finish it. Closely akin to Frankenstein must come GULLIVER'S TRAVELS. This too, is hard reading, but does include the miniature Lilliputians, the talking horses (hounhyns), and the yahoos. Runner up in this area must be Count DRACULA as he is hotly pursued by van Helsing as he seeks to spread his vampirism. Another heavy diary-style book, but made for excellent films even though Bela Lugosi over acted the part.

Much more readable and prolific was H.G.Wells, like some 90% of SF readers of my generation, his yarns were the first samples of SF to come along the highway. I still shudder when meeting a jellyfish and my first encounter with an octopus on a beach in the Cocos Islands wasn't exactly delightful. The reason was the horrible creatures in THE SEA RAIDERS as they came ashore on an English beach and began their diet by chewing on an unwary boatman. THE VALLEY OF SPIDERS gave me cold shudders and increased my dislike of the species as the wind born creatures drifted down the valley to attack the horse riders. Equally scary was THE EMPIRE OF THE ANTS as these intelligent insects cornered a native on a boat. Even the blood-sucking activities of a plant in THE FLOWERING OF THE STRANGE ORCHID rather put me off exotic plants. IN THE ABYSS gave us strange underwater creatures trapping a bathysphere, WAR OF THE WORLDS supplied Martians, a bat-like creature scared us IN THE

AVU OBSERVATORY, and THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU was populated by mutated beings.

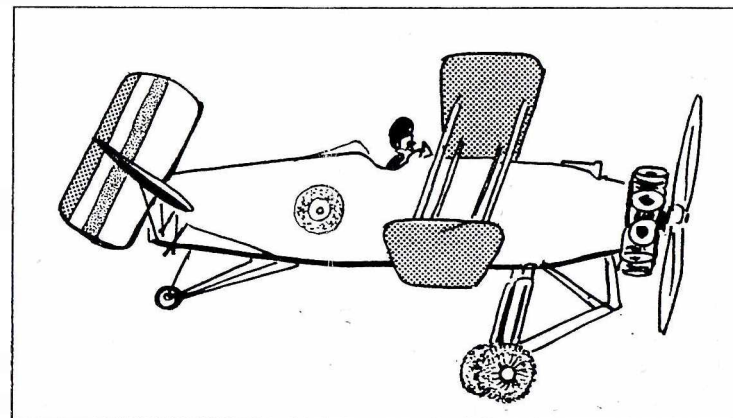
I'm sorry if I mussed out your favourite alien, but one can't list 'em all. In any case, the yarns I've mentioned make far better reading than some epic such as "Hackalot.IV Lolli" by Pott Boila or "Dragon Dreck Star Dancer" or don't you agree?

=0=0=0=0=0=0=

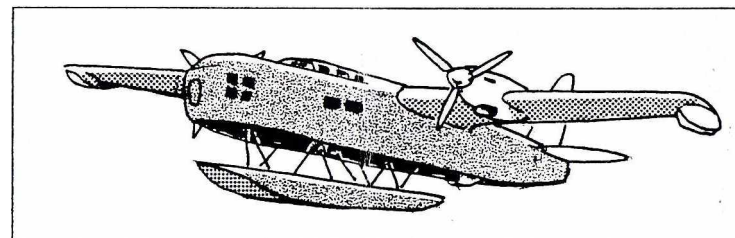


## GREAT IDEAS

In the days when I used to build radio sets I often thought what a good idea it would be to make all the resistors and capacitors variable. They could all be twiddled until perfect reception was obtained, then each variable could be measured and replaced with a fixed component. A similar idea seems to have occurred to the designers of the ARMSTRONG WHITWORTH 'APE'. In the 1920s, some bright blokes thought it would be a good idea to build an aircraft with as many adjustable parts as possible in order to find the best possible setting for them all. The result was the 'Ape', a biplane with all sorts of wobbly bits which could be altered before each flight. Three were built, but due to being underpowered the results were of little value and all machines were written off in crashes.



The BLACKBURN B-20 was based on the fact that seaplanes suffered from needing to keep the propellers high out of the water and requiring a high wing incidence angle to get them off the water. In 1936, to solve both problems in one swoop, Blackburns designed a twin-engined flying boat with a retractable pontoon forming the lower part of the fuselage. Lowered, it kept props and wings clear of the water. When raised it made a streamlined fuselage. The machine had a crew of six and two powered gun turrets. The idea worked well, but ended in a crash and was never followed up.





In the previous issue I was foolish enough to mention that I was suffering from a few chilblains. I should keep this sort of thing to myself. I should have learnt by now not to be a concern to you good people, nay, Good People, out there. I don't know what is ERG's circulation, but about a hundred and ten percent of it wrote in with a litany of remedies guaranteed to get rid of these happy little nodules. These ranged from a pleasant little mixture of blackcurrant juice and Malibu to be taken at regular intervals and in copious amounts to... well, no, there may be children reading this and I don't wish to corrupt young and innocent minds. I'll leave that to the letter column. Needless to say, I ignored the remedies that were in danger of corrupting my young and innocent mind and concentrated on those which, even if they didn't work, would help pass a happy stupor induced evening while rerunning my collection of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* tapes.

No, you're right. Nothing worked. My chilblains laugh in the face... well, the hands and feet, anyway, of such adversity. So... should I mention my insomnia?

Actually, I'm not altogether certain that this is insomnia. I sleep very well, thank you. Ask anyone who has tried phoning me before noon. It's *falling* asleep that's the trouble. There really *must* be a successful formula.

With chilblains, everyone to whom I've mentioned the problem knows a cure. "I don't get chilblains myself," they've told me with glee. Perhaps even malicious glee. "But Auntie Edie knew someone down her road who tried blah blah..." And all sorts of highly vaunted cures had worked a treat. Well, buster, they didn't with me.

But with failing to sleep, it's just *slightly* different. Here, everyone to whom one informs of the problem has had the same trouble him or her self. And every single one of the remedies has worked. No trouble at all. For them.

There is, of course, the centuries old solution of counting sheep. It doesn't work for me. Just no power of concentration, that's my trouble. I start out all right, notching up the little dears as they either jump over fences or are rounded up into pens. Then... suddenly the mind picture changes to sheep herds threatening the flocks of cattle in Oklahoma and before you can say Laurey and Curly I'm questioning why the Cowboy and the Ploughman can't be friends.

Another remedy that seems to work for many other people is picking up a book and reading oneself to sleep. Ha! This has *never* worked for me. I simply become involved in the story and go on reading. This is most definitely a counter productive remedy when books like *War and Peace* or *Gone With the Wind* happen to be lying within reach on the bedside table.

Two or three different people told me that I should try stretching out and relaxing one part of my body at a time. Concentrate on each toe in turn, they advise. Ha! There's that word again, concentrate. As soon as I focus my tiny little brain on any particular toe, my foot goes into spasm and I'm having to throw myself out of bed to stamp around the room in usually a futile attempt to rid myself of cramp.

Probably the best... certainly the most amenable and sensible... suggestion made to me is to take a tumbler, to fill it half with whisky and top it up with Scotch. Well, ignore the following day's hangover and it works. It actually works. You know it does. I told you not to phone me before noon

-- pf

## IDLE THOUGHTS

Sometimes I sits and thinks, this hectic activity lets things pop in and out of my noddle without any theme to guide them. The other day I heard someone say that they "liked to go out and eat Chinese". Naturally, I wondered if the person might be a cannibal. No doubt about it, we sometimes use words in strange ways. Imagine some suspected criminal undergoing a hefty grilling, more cannibalism? This is usually termed, "helping police with their enquiries." Then of course, one can no longer refer to a friend as a 'gay' person or as being 'a bit queer', without being misunderstood.

The PC thumpers look askance at Anna Sewell's 'Black Beauty' until they find it to be about a horse. Enid Blyton's Noddy has been censored by a zealous librarian and stranger still, whilst gutter language is given free rein on TV, "It's how people talk these days". An almighty howl goes up if someone gets called a 'wog' despite this originally being an acronym for 'wily oriental gentleman' - now if it meant a wily Eastern person, would there be objections to 'wep'?

On a totally different tack, how about those twits who swap houses to give each other carte blanche to desecrate one of their rooms? Does their desire to be seen on the telly outweigh their common sense? Strangely, the female half of each couple usually develops instant religion on seeing the mayhem wrought on their home by ejaculating "My God" or "My Gawd". It must be nice to own a personal deity.

On another program, I watched in awe an intrepid dispenser of 'aromatherapy' (You are what you pong) as she struggled to convert three packing crates into a desirable modern home. She was aided (hindered?) by the incredible advice of a 'Feng Shui' expert who insisted on where to place bathroom, kitchen, loo and bed-pointing directions in order to achieve the best possible energy flows. Then there was the titled lady who bunged crystals in every nook and cranny, including the stable of a racehorse with a broken leg, in order to let their energy flows do all sorts of unspecified good. Ah there are mysteries man should not tamper with.

Whackiness is everywhere. What idiot will ring an 0891 number and pay £1.00 a minute for ten minutes or so, simply for a horoscope? I'm generous, I'll cast one for half that price. I'd love to see half a dozen of these horoscope casters all cast horoscopes for an undisclosed notable's birthdate, then see how they compared.

Still on TV, does anyone know why disaster and medical themes predominate? Every channel has programs wallowing in such blood and guts programming. Tomorrow's World regularly devotes 10 minutes of each half hour to brain damage, operations or illness. Drama series agonise in hospitals, London gets burned down every week and each soap instalment invariably ends with some sort of angst. Just for the hell of it, I went through the Radio Times checking medical slots. I came up with TWO pages of medical slanted programmes, pseudo documentaries and their ilk. I once wrote to the BBC and suggested several new programs on these lines, 'Ready, Steady, Operate' would involved three teams composed of one surgeon and one family couple performing some intricate operation against the clock, with bonus points for those spilling the most blood. 'Who Lit It?' In this hilarious detective game, ten people creep

into a deserted house. One player sets it alight and all retreat. An audience panel must work out who did the deed. Winner gets a year's supply of matches. You get the idea. Lunatics are everywhere, if you can't lick 'em, join 'em.

Then there are corn circles; those weird discs, triangles and other symbols flattened in fields of growing crops. I've seen umpteen 'explanations' of what caused them, all ignoring the obvious (and even admitted) one that hoaxers simply trampled down the plants. Despite this, so-called experts have postulated 'circular miniature whirlwinds'. Just what sort of whirlwind appears in one spot, stays there to produce concentric circles or wanders around in neat, straight line and triangles? Then there are the UFO nuts who claim the patterns are the work of UFOs or their inhabitants. What possible reason could aliens find for coming all this way to Earth just to carve out aimless patterns in a field? If they want to communicate, there are more direct ways and if they want to remain anonymous, why draw attention to their activities?

The trouble is, some people are always ready to accept crackpot ideas before the obvious one. Many punters buy copper bracelets because they are advertised as, "said to prevent rheumatism", or "many believe that..." Note that the vendors don't claim their wares actually do anything, only that "some people" might think they do. I fancy that those who claim cures get them from the psychosomatic action of their strong belief in such aid. In this connection, one should not forget the man who wrote to the Prime Minister to explain that the NHS could save thousands of pounds on treating arthritis, simply by getting everyone to wear socks with the toe ends cut off. As proof, he offered the fact that he had worn such socks for all his life and had no traces of arthritis.

I sometimes wonder if the panic over the radiation from mobile phones is in the same category. All I can say is that I worked (and often slept) in a transmitting station operating eight 1.5Kw transmitters round the clock. As far as I know, I suffered no ill effects.

Returning to TV and what constitutes entertainment these days, I offer two clippings from the Radio Times. The tagline for *The Sopranos* says, *Christopher's life hangs in the balance, Carmela confronts Tony about his infidelity and Dr.Melfi reveals her problems with substance abuse. Contains strong language and violence.*

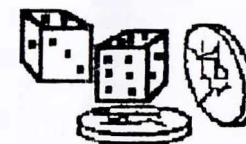
Then picking that show as the week's Choice, we are told...

*One of the best episodes so far, this brings up the roles of morality and religion in the lives of the mobsters. The catalyst is Christopher's brush with the grim reaper which gets these 'soldiers' thinking about Hell. Paulie Walnuts feels the money he's paid to the church should have protected him from such a fate, while Pussy is feeling guilty as Hell. The double standard is maintained when one minute Tony acts like the best father on Earth and the next becomes a murdering monster who takes too much pleasure in wiping out his victim. Superb but scary.*

No, I didn't watch it to find out how much worse things got, but I still wonder what sort of society we're in which looks on such activities as 'entertainment'. Maybe there's a parallel with decadent Rome gloating over beer and circuses, or am I reading too much into things?

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-

## Fancy Your Chances?



Everybody knows that if you toss a coin and call 'Heads', you have an even (1:2) chance of being right.

Take the rolling of a die, this time, you have 1 chance in six of throwing a selected number. But how about TWO dice? Roll a pair and you have eleven possible totals (You can't throw a 1 using two dice). So what are your chances of throwing a 2? Since you can only do this by getting a pair of ones, you would expect your chances to be one out of eleven (1:11), but they are NOT. Two dice can have no less than 36 possible combinations ...

2...1,1	3...1,2 or 2,1	
4...1,3 3,1 or 2,2	5...1,4 4,1 2,3 3,2	
6...1,5 5,1 2,4 4,2 3,3	7...1,6 6,1 2,5 5,2 3,4 4,3	
8...2,6 6,2 3,5 5,3 4,4	9...3,6 6,3 4,5 5,4	
10...4,6 6,4 5,5	11...5,6 6,5	12...6,6

So your chances of throwing a two are only 1:36, but improve to 6 out of 36 (1:6) for getting a seven

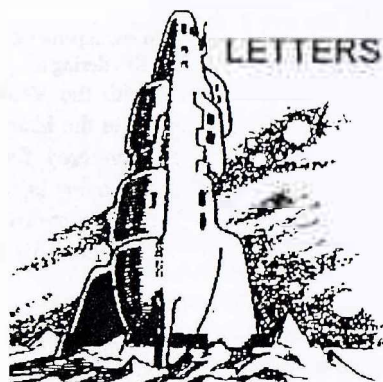
Which brings me to the National Lottery where your chances of winning several million quid are roughly 1 in nearly 14 million! Despite such long odds, twice a week the ever-hopeful lash out their lolly in eternal hope. After all, someone *might* (not *has*) to win. Some weeks nobody takes the kitty.

Returning to our dice, if I gave you nine dice, charged you a quid and offered £1,000,000 if you rolled them and got nine 'ones', would you play? Probably not, but at 1 in about 10,000,000 your chances of winning would be better than in the lottery.

No doubt about it, betting is a mug's game -- unless you're a bookie

Terry Jeeves





**RON CLARKE**, 2/141 Chapel Rd., (South), Bankstown, NSW 2000, AUSTRALIA

I received ERG 152 yesterday - it seemed to have caught a swift breeze to have got here so fast. I notice it is your January 2001 issue - and here I received it on the other side of the planet in November 2000. *[2 week transit, not bad]* I liked the fantastic inventions article - there have certainly been some strange starship (and spaceship) drives - put forward in the "real world" - such as the ship propelled by exploding ~~to explode~~ *that that kind of his kind thing* have to be really tough and thick! *[It always struck me as a bonkers idea]* It is interesting the number of old ideas (such as the space gun in

THINGS TO COME) where the unfortunate crew would get smeared - and the science of the day knew they would, but the author didn't take any notice. Though I suppose there are modern day writers who don't take notice of science. *[90% of 'em nowadays.*

*Invoking a Dark Lord and a magic wielding princess is easier]*

**PAMELA BOAL** 4 Wwstfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, OXON, OX12 7EW  
Sorry to say I had great trouble reading half of this issue, even though I have my best specs ever and a very efficient magnifying bar (thanks to my new excellent optician) the tiny print with some letters being blotchy defeated me. As always I enjoyed what I could read and thank you especially for bringing Future Facts to my attention. Definitely going on my Christmas wants list, predictions based on actual research taking place have always fascinated me. *[Sorry about the type size Pam, but it's already a couple of sizes larger than that used on many incoming items.]*

**STEVE SNEYD**, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, HD5 8PB  
Mentioning 'curmudgeon' intriguing how words going out are coming back into vogue. 'sprog' is another excellent example. I looked up your name-phrases in Cassell's Dictionary of Slang. Says 'Fritz' could be anti-german or onomatopoeic for noise of faulty, sparking electrics. 'Betty Martin', several theories; including gambling of Beate Martene - blessed St. Martin, patron of publicans; or a late 18th Cent "abandoned woman" whose catchphrase was "All my eye". *[Truly, all knowledge is to be found in fanzines]*

**ALAN BURNS** 19 The Crescent, Kings Rd. Sth., Wallsend, N.Tyneside NE28 7RE  
Your cover picture of a four-armed bod recalled a story in the 30s Astounding about a blind captain and his four-armed son - who made Edison and Einstein look like pikers, on a ship to Mars. Guess what, the engines cut out just as they were coming in to land and the blind captain took them in because he knew the feel of the air currents. Current pilot hands the old fellow his wings and says, "They're yours, Daddio" *[I think the title was 'Done With Eagles']*

**GENE STEWART**, 17110 Dianne Ave, Bellevue, NE 68005, USA

**THE SUPERHEROES** - This brought back memories. My own favorite grand pulp era superheroes were The Shadow and Doc Savage. I was lucky enough to inherit a few old pulps, than to live during a reprint revival. Exciting, imaginative, and suspenseful, these stories, along with the Venus & Mars series of ERB, allowed me in my own life and mind to recapitulate the history of science fiction. As a method of education I'd advise it, and I've often wondered if a lack of proper exposure to pulp writing at proper ages might not explain the many lapses of today's writers. They need to see the fun in basic storytelling before being exposed to more sophisticated, or self-indulgent, fare, perhaps. *[The pulp era might have been largely hack, but it had life and interest]*

**ROGER WADDINGTON**, 4 Commercial St., Norton, Malton, N.Yorks YO17 9ES

Re *What's In A Name*, I'll have to copy John McEnroe and say you cannot be serious!! At least, in not professing to know why a low ball, sent whizzing at grass height, should be called a daisy-cutter. I can forgive anyone brought up in the Fifties for wondering if the Ken of *Beyond Our Ken*, was perhaps Kenneth Home, from the radio programme of that ilk; but we know better don't we, we know that it's an old word for knowing and it's still in the Scots language today. But it's all part of Life's rich tapestry, isn't it? Right from Adam, as the Bible would have us believe, when he named all the animals; we're determined that nothing should be beyond our ken, and put a name to everything

**ERIC LINDSAY**, PO Box 640, Airlie Beach, QLD 4802, AUSTRALIA  
I wonder how long it is before all the Doc Savage novels are out on the internet, so we can re-read all that bad prose and unlikely adventures. Still, they were fun. I particularly liked the adventures of Prof Jameson and the Zorome machine men, but none could compare with Doc Smith for bigger and better (and more galaxy destroying gadgets). *[I doubt whether we'll ever see Doc Savage on the net, but I loved his old pulps and Doc Smith was simply, the greatest, despite what people will say about him nowadays]*

**BRIAN TAWN**, 27 Burdett Rd., Wisabeck, Cambs, PE13 2PR  
I've been down that washing machine road, with me it was television. In 1972 I paid £3.00 for a Pye portable and a month later, another for £2.00. In those days we had all sorts of interesting removable bits in the sets, so when one went wrong, I simply swapped bits around until I got a set that worked. This worked fine for a couple of years till the night came when I couldn't get a peep out of either of them. Enough was enough, I threw both sets out, breaking them to remove any temptation to struggle with them again. Then we plugged in the record player and it wouldn't work...a fuse had blown in the main control box!

**TED HUGHES**, 10 Kenmore Rd., Whitefield, Manchester M45 8ER ERG 152. Was the cover your own invention? *[Yes]* If so, what's the four-armed gent up to? It looks as though he's sliding a bomb down a rope to the rocket ship. *[You'd never guess.]* For a while I thought he had two heads, because the arm holding the torch is almost the same shape as his conical (comical?) cranium. I like the slit pocket in his tight britches. Inventions. You didn't miss a single one, did you? Almost spoiled some of the old yarns for me - not having such a critical attitude when I read 'em. I still have a soft spot for spindizzies, and the offhand way Blish executed his city managers when they put a foot wrong.

**DALE SPEIRS**, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA T2P 2E7 Re 'Fantastic Inventions' You mention Neil R. Jones using a flywheel to launch spacecraft. Edward Everett Hale published the first ever story about an Earth satellite in 1869. 'The Brick Moon'. It was launched by rolling down into a pair of counter-rotating giant flywheels. The Brick Moon not only survived the G-forces without spraying red brick all over the landscape, but the people inside it lived out their lives in orbit in its artificial ecosystem.

**PETE PRESFORD**, Rose Cottage, 3 Tram Lane, Buckley, CLWYD, N. Wales CH7 3JD

**FANTASTIC INVENTIONS** I needed one to read the print. I've never really been into 'Superheroes', I prefer ordinary people who do more than they really should. I mean, Dan Dare, Mr. Holmes etc. Men who used ordinary powers, yet could come out on top. And doesn't every hero need a side kick? Of course they do, makes things/plotlines more interesting. [Well Doc Savage, Kim Kinnison, Black Sapper and G-8 all had sidekicks]

**JOHN MAJOR**, 1409 Chrsty Ave., Louisville, KY 40204-2040, USA Down Memory Bank Lane 15, The Superheroes: There are still pulp heroes of that sort around. They appear in paperback book series. Admittedly they seem to be more gritty and less likeable than the thirties heroes. The most common type is the Avenger: the former soldier or expert martial-artist who murders criminals in carload lots with the tacit approval of the authorities. Fortunately for morality and justice all the people he kills are worthless scum who deserve it.

Of course, some of Doc Savage's moralities look rather, well, odd by today's standards. For example, that little trick of operating on the brains of captured enemies to make them good guys...

I think the Lensman series could do well with a repackaging. What I would do would be to publish the four "core" Lensman books -- Galactic Patrol, Gray Lensman, Second Stage Lensman, and Children of the Lens -- in one volume, in the original serialized versions; i.e., without the explanatory material "giving away" the hidden story of the real struggle of the Eddorians and Arisians. Let the reader of today discover the growing power of Boskonian with Kinnison, as the readers of the thirties and forties did, without having to wait until next month. QX? [Great idea as the reader wouldn't be faced with having to read all four until they had sucked him in. I know the yarns are rated as naive nowadays, but they are still far better than the average pot-boiling S&S or Pern dragons.]

**RON BENNETT**, 36 Harlow Park Crescent, Harrogate, N Yorkshire

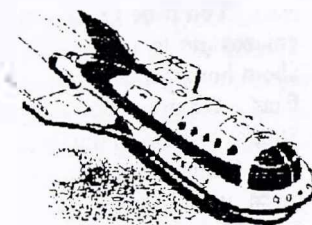
You'll be telling me next you don't believe in horoscopes. [I don't!] It constantly amazes me to meet people who swear, absolutely swear my dear that all that garbage about horoscopes and the zodiac is kosher. And when you try to point out certain basic facts... the pseudo-scientific junk that pours third (it's not even good enough for fourth). Still, as one kid in my first ever teaching job told me, obviously parroting his very learned papa, "Man will never get to the moon. If God had wanted us to get there he would have given us all wings." Logical, when you come to think of it seriously. [Funny coincidence, in one of my early classes when I started teaching, an infant explained how UFOs fly by moving magnets around. His dad told him. History repeats - hic.]

**ROBERT LICHTMAN**, PO Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442, USA "Fantastic Inventions" was a fun read, but only one specific comment. Although it's been years—decades really—since I read Blish's Spindizzy tales, it seems to me that the mechanism that lifted those entire cities into space must have also provided gravity for the inhabitants (and everything else) once they were aloft. I base this theory on having no memory whatsoever of the populace et al floating off into space. [You're right, but I never thought of that angle.] As an American, of course I know where "put your John Hancock on that" came from, but I have no idea from whence came "Doubting Thomas" and "Charley's Aunt" and would appreciate any explanation you can offer. [Doubting Thomas is from the Bible and Charley's Aunt was a comic play.]

**ERIC LINDSAY**, PO Box 640, Airlie Beach, QLD 4802, Australia Many thanks for Erg 152. That brought back some memories, especially the mention of the giant wheel that chucked a space car into space in the Prof Jameson stories. Like you, I thought some of the E E Smith ideas were pretty interesting, at least for story purposes. Some of the What's In a Name lines confuse me. I guess they didn't all reach Australia, or I missed hearing them. On the march of progress, I have a great collection of "future things" books here. Most are describing a future that has now arrived. I plan to go through them and see just how well they did. Like you, I suspect some of may now be in our food supply.

**BRIAN E. BROWN**, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224, USA I enjoyed reading about the many fantastic inventions in science fiction. James Blish's "spindizzies" were, as you mention, not well used as a gimmick in the series. It was nonetheless an interesting idea in its suggestion that the only drives to beat Newtonian physics might have to be the size of a building and have an effect in the miles not the hundreds of feet of most starships. You go on to mention Capt. Chandler's clanking Inertial Drive and the Dean Drive on different pages and somehow don't connect that they are essentially the same idea. Both use rotating unbalanced weights with gimmicked linkages which hope to somehow transfer momentum in a non-linear direction. I read a Jack Williamson story in Weird Tales, The Throne of Fate? Turns out a mad scientist on the moon runs a calculator and manipulates the fate of everyone on the earth. But - the suprising thing was that the hero and heroine got to the moon in an inertial drive ship, based on a reverse perpetual motion device. Instead of gravity generating energy, energy turning the wheel creates anti-gravity! [Whichever way they run, I doubt perpetual motion machines.]

**LAST MINUTE FANZINE**: - Challenger 13 comes from Guy Lillian III, PO Box 53092, New Orleans, LA 70153-392, USA A magnificently produced 100 pages with card cover and more than 20 pages of photos. You get a gripping account of attending a Shuttle launch, a short story, pages of in-depth fanz reviews, comment on that election, Gene Stewart on P.K. Dick, Greg Benford & Russell Blackford on Shakespeare and SF, John Berry on fingerprints, oodles of long LOCs and much more. For the usual or \$6.00





# FANZINES

**SKUG.15** Gary Mattingly, 7501 Honey Ct., Dublin, CA 94568, USA 60 pages and full-colour card covers. Crammed to the gills with comments on work, music, books, computers, poetry, films and LOCs. Back after a long absence and well worth the wait. A nice friendly zine which you can probably get for a faunching letter.

**YNGVI IS A LOUSE.** 67 TKF Weisskopf, 3188 Atlanta Hwy., PMB Box 385, Athens, CA 30606- USA A striking, but eye-straining red cover leads you into personal doings, reading etc. Charlotte Proctor has a column, there are pieces on fly-catching, logic, politics and guns. LOCs and several pages on politics and gun laws. Bags of variety and enough argument hooks for everyone

**THE KNARLEY KNEWS.**84 Henry Welch, 1525 16th Ave., Grafton, WI 53024-2017 USA 28pp on a travel-cum Con trip, another piece on holiday travel and a Charlotte Proctor column on films. Gene Stewart on TV SF, a musing about fanzines then an excellent helping of LOCs plus capsule finz reviews. Get it for the usual or \$1.50

**VANAMONDE 373,4,5 & 6** John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado St., No.409, Los Angeles, CA 90057 A single sheet apazine with some editorial natter, plus added comments from LOCers.. Brief but nice, this must hold the record for regular and often publication

**WABE.2** a three editor combined zine of 18pp Natter on travelling to new places, an autobiographical item by Jean Gomoll, mini finz reviews, trip account and plenty of LOCs. Get it from Bill Bodden, PO Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624, USA

**VISIONS OF PARADISE & HALCYON DAYS** Robert M.Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Ct., Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023 VOP (24pp) is largely Bob's diary, followed by 'Letters From Tibet, Book reviews, some finz comment and a joke page. LOCs are catered for in HD which runs to another massive 24 pages. Nice, friendly and unpretentious

**OPUNTIA 46.5B & C** Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA T2P 2E7 16pp each, B is devoted to a ong, fascinating journey, C has all the LOCs Unusual, two column, sideways format, but it makes for nice reading

**NO AWARD.8** Marty Cantor, 11825 Gilmore St. #105, N.Hollywood. CA 91606-2844, USA (e-mail martyhoohaw@netzero.net) 30pp covering diet, exercise, strange sayings, book review, one fanzine reviewed, cartoons, Moffatt's memoirs, LOCs and more. Get it in colour off the net. Print out you own full-colour copy

**CHALLENGER.12** Guy H.Lillian, PO Box 53092, New Orleans, LA 70153-3092, USA

A massive 100 pager with articles on battle flags, a murder trial, three violent vignettes, fingerprinting a corpse, books of C.J.Cherryh. H.P.Lovecraft and P.K.Dick compared, all this and much more, plus huge Letter and Fanzine columns. Excellent reading for everyone with never a dull moment. A super issue. Get it for the usual or \$6.00 an issue

**IDEA.12** Geri Sullivan, 3444 Blaisdell Ave Sth., Minneapolis, MN 55408-4315 A hefty 76pp, a super colour cover photo collection, a Con natter, TAFF report, a long and entertaining Langford trip, a solar eclipse jaunt, some verse and simply oodles of LOCs. A great zine, welcome back after absence, no price given, so try the usual.