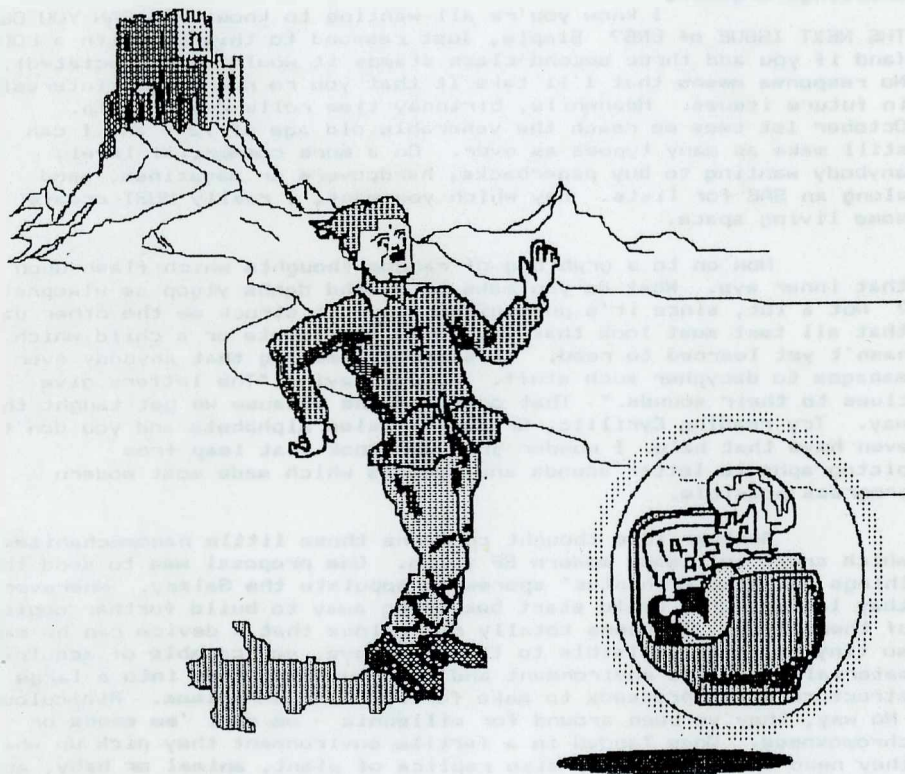


ERG 127

QUARTERLY
OCTOBER 1994



REEVES

ERG 126

QUARTERLY

OCTOBER 1994

NOW IN ITS 35th. YEAR

TERRY JEEVES
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***** ERGITORIAL RAMBLINGS *****

Greetings Ergbods,

I know you're all wanting to know, HOW CAN YOU GET THE NEXT ISSUE of ERG? Simple, just respond to this one with a LOC. (and if you add three second-class stamps it would be appreciated). No response means that I'll take it that you're not really interested in future issues. Meanwhile, birthday time rolls round again. October 1st sees me reach the venerable old age of 72 - and I can still make as many typos as ever. On a more commercial level, anybody wanting to buy paperbacks, hardcovers or magazines, send along an SAE for lists. Say which you want, I really MUST create some living space.

Now on to a grab bag of random thoughts which flash upon that inner eye. What do you make of "ywthd dghhs ylgop se wlaopnst"? Not a lot, since it's pure gibberish. It struck me the other day, that all text must look that way to an illiterate or a child which hasn't yet learned to read. It's pretty amazing that anybody ever manages to decypher such stuff. No use saying "The letters give clues to their sounds." That only happens because we get taught that way. Try reading Cyrillic, Greek or Moslem alphabets and you don't even have that help. I wonder just who took that leap from pictographs to letter sounds and symbols which made most modern progress possible.

Another idle thought concerns those little nanomechanisms which creep into many modern SF yarns. One proposal was to send the things out like Arrhenius' spores to populate the Galaxy. Wherever they landed, they would start beavering away to build further copies of themselves. It seems totally ridiculous that a device can be made so tiny as to be invisible to the human eye, yet capable of acquiring materials from its environment and then building them into a large structure which proceeds to make further nanomechanisms. Ridiculous?

No way, they've been around for millennia - we call 'em seeds or chromosomes. Once landed in a fertile environment they pick up what they need to build a full size replica of plant, animal or baby, and one fully capable of creating further nanomechanisms. Truly truth is way ahead of SF, but it still leaves the question, "What's it all for in the end?"

Still idly thinking, there's the blurring of the red-shift of receding stars on their velocity of recession after the big bang. It sounds very plausible, but can anyone tell me why the furthest stars should be moving fastest? Even more puzzling is the fact that some stars show a blue shift indicating they are approaching rather than receding. Was there as big suck as well as a bang? Furthermore, if enough matter can collapse into a Black Hole which nothing can escape, how come the original pre-Bang didn't form an inescapable Black Hole? Oh well, they say a fool can ask questions a wise man can't answer.

Another totally pointless bit of thinking concerns the recent aims to limit tobacco advertising. The Government is working towards banning such advertising altogether, (especially near schools and on telly) in an attempt to reduce smoking among children. An admirable aim, but who are they kidding? How many non-smokers, be they adults or children, see an ad for fags and decide to take up the weed? Precious few I suspect. Given a poll I'd bet that 99.9% of tobacco addicts took it up either because of peer group pressure, or simply to copy parents or someone they admired such as sports or pop idols they had seen puffing away. In my own case, I started smoking (at age 19) simply because on a troop ship to India, we played cards using cigarettes as cheap gambling chips. It seemed daft to pick up my winnings and just chuck 'em away, so I tried smoking the things. I was a smoker from 1942 to 1960 before giving up the filthy habit. Advertising doesn't START people smoking, it simply tries to persuade them to change brands.

At the end of June, I received a letter from Paul Duncan, 17 Tregullan Rd., Exhall, Coventry. He said he was researching the work of Gerald Kersh and asked me to send him photocopies of reviews in various SF magazines, along with details of Kersh's work in SF mags. No return SAE enclosed, or offer to reimburse me. I took that as an oversight. Instead of photocopying, Val kindly typed out three lots of magazine reviews. I sent these, hunted up other info and also added names of others who might be able to help. I bunged the lot off and sat back. Since then, not a word of thanks or acknowledgement from Mr. Duncan, so if you hear from him, beware.

Then there's the business of toleration. Look friend, I don't care what your religion, politics, music or recreation interests may be. I wouldn't dream of decrying them even though my own tastes differ. I vote Tory, am an atheist, dislike pop music, love snooker but have little use for football or cricket. OK, we can still be friends, I'll not slag your beliefs and you won't slag mine. Live and let live and so on. So why does a certain unmentionable fanzine go out of its way to slag my preference for a political party? In my book, no party is perfect, each has some good ideas and some bad ones. People aren't slobs just because they vote differently from you or prefer fantasy, Star Trekking or Dr. Who, to your favourite tippie. Some fan think their choice of SF or writer is the correct one and all others are as thick as the proverbial two short planks. Terrorists feel their religion is the only true way; sports and pop fans think everyone loves football, Wimbledon and Mick Jagger. Given the chance, I suspect some of these characters would bring back the Inquisition - to ensure that everyone thought the only true way - theirs. Let's get back to accepting that people have different opinions and not descend into bad-mouthing anyone with different views. That's my view anyway. You're free to disagree with me if you choose, I'll not send the boys round to duff you up.

I recently saw the TV programme 'HERETIC' on an engineer called Laithwaite who had put moving weights and gyroscopes together and rediscovered the Kidd machine which first surfaced in the fifties as 'The Dean Drive'. Like the earlier devices, his machine thumped and banged up and down, knocking hell out of the scales, but never got airborne. Much was made of the way in which he could lift a spinning gyroscope too heavy to be lifted when still. I suspect the energy of lift comes from a slowing of the wheel. A parallel would be the tiny amount of energy needed to push a weight over a cliff - and cause disaster at the bottom. It makes you think.

4

In a recent LOC to Ken Cheslin, I deplored the high cost of modern Conventions. Someone took me to task saying that I had forgotten the effects of inflation. Not so, just consider these facts. In 1947/48, Cons cost 5/- a time. As a newly qualified teacher, I took home £28.00 a month. That would have bought me 112 attendances. When I retired in 1980 as a Scale 3, Head of Department, my take home pay was £400 a month which would have bought only 20 Con trips at the then rate of £20 or more. Now it's 1994, starting price of the Glasgow Con was £60, now it's even higher. I don't know how many a starting-teacher could buy at that price, but I'm sure it wouldn't be 112 of 'em. To do that he'd need £6720 a month! As for me, my two pensions together (State and teaching) would only get me 14 Con tickets. So I still say Cons cost too much nowadays. No, I didn't forget inflation, but my disclaiming friend obviously forgot how cheap Cons used to be. OK, nowadays you get parallel programming plus films and panels -- but you can only attend ONE at a time. B&B haven't risen so sharply, so why have Cons?

Last week, we made one of our scenic tours; dead easy, as the National Park and North Yorkshire Moors start at the end of our road, some 300 yards away. We headed North through the villages of Burniston and Cloughton, turned off to Ruswarp just before reaching Robin Hood's bay and headed for Guisborough. After a mile or so, we turned off and wended our way through country lanes to the hamlet of Lealholm in Eskdale. Parking in the (free) car park, we walked over the bridge across the Esk, admired the ducks, wandered past the pub, side-stepped the sheep slumbering peacefully on the road and peered into the antique bookshop. We circled round, re-crossed the river on the stepping-stones and came to the villahe hall. For £1 each, we joined a group of locals at a long table and were regaled with coffee and as much as we could eat from plates heaped high with buns, tarts, pastries, sandwiches, sausage rolls and various varieties of cake. We staggered on past the pottery to the 'Poet's Corner', no poets, but a very well equipped and low-priced plant nursery.

Back to the car, we could have gone South to Rosedale and the Abbey, but opted to go through Glaisdale, and Egton to Grosmont. On the way we came across a lovingly ~~restored~~ packhorse bridge. We stopped for a picnic snack at Grosmont - not easy after all we ate in Lealholm. Grosmont is the terminus of the North Yorkshire Moors Steam Railway, so we inspected the trains before moving on to Sleights and along the banks of the Esk (boats available) to Ruswarp and the road home. A lovely run, and less than fifty miles in distance. Moreover, by sticking mainly to country lanes we avoided all the Bank Holiday lemmings heading for the coast.

Remember the Holbeck Hall Hotel collapse which made TV screens around the world? The Council has now built a large sea wall of huge boulders, topped it with smaller stones, then soil. They have landscaped the lot, planted grass and trees and a winding road leads from promenade up to the top of the cliff. Two more years and a disaster site will have become a local beauty spot. Not so happily, a crumbling cliff threatens a hotel in the fishing hamlet of Robin Hood's Bay. But this hotel is at a road junction and if it goes, the village will be totally cut off. Let's hope they can fix it quickly as there's an excellent bookshop cum tea room down there.

Meanwhile, happy reading, (and LOCing). All the best,

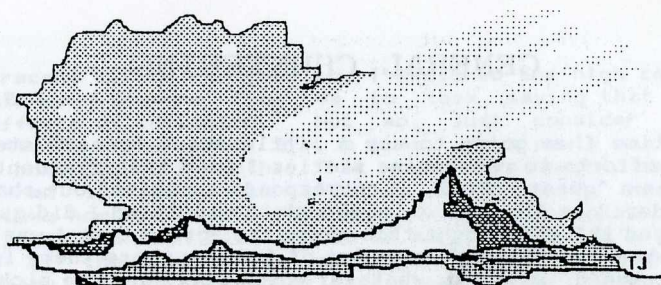
Terry

GENERAL CHUNTERING

Ken F Slater

This time I am going to say a little about "quest" stories, to open. In my efforts to categorise stories I find that frequently I refer to a book as a "quest novel". A correspondent pointed out that this could be considered as dismissive, although she admitted I did qualify by saying "enjoyed it". I thought this over, and agreed that I was in a groove and using the term "quest" for a lot of fantasy where there is a search for a crown, sword, jewel, or whatever which will cure the sick princess, kill the evil wizard, or decide the rightful ruler (um, got those in the wrong order, but who cares ?) and then I remembered a long time ago I'd written an item pointing out that most science fiction resembled detective fiction in that a solution was being sought by the protagonist(s). And a "quest" is a "search", so most s-f and fantasy in which a solution to a problem (be it a cure for a disease, or a means of deflecting an asteroid) are "quest" stories. I went on a quest for G. David Nordley stories in ANALOG to comment on one of the letter extracts Terry sent me. I've got a stack of eighteen issues ranging from Jan '93 to Jun '94 here, and find only two yarns, both are novellas; one in the Trimus series which I found entertaining if rather lengthy, and the other *Into The Miranda Rift* which I couldn't recall reading, but had. One of those tales about the exploratory expedition which gets into trouble. I've been bored by those since around 1928 - I come from a generation where the exploits of Peary, Amundsen and Scott were required reading in school, which probably had an effect. But I appreciate Richard Newsome's points, particularly in regard to the latter story; although two stories and an article in 18 issues is hardly a star role. From the past I recall a score or more of stories of the (group of) explorer(s) lost/hurt/short of air/food/common sense who get away with it by some trickery or other, performed by them or a rescue party. Hiking across an airless world or falling thru an airless void were problems in early stories, for which authors found a variety of solutions. On rare occasions the fool-killer was allowed his due; usually when the "expedition" story was just part of larger work. But on the whole the variations are limited and the outcome not in question. I was trying to spot examples of early yarns in the indices and got put onto an entirely different train of thought. Whilst on holiday I drove past the windfarm at Delabole (B3314 in Cornwall) several times and recalling the arguments I've heard from various sources ("They are ugly, they spoil the view", "they are noisy, keep us awake at night", "they disturb the animals") I took several good looks at these and some others in the area. I did not find them ugly; they are considerably more pleasing to the eye than the junior Eiffel Tower kits that are liberally strewn over the landscape in the area where I live. Now, is this due to an outlook in some way conditioned by magazine covers which depict landscapes such as that Leo Morey did for *Thia of the Drylands* (AS Jul 32) and Howard V. Brown for *World of Purple Light* (ASF Dec 36), or do I have the wrong viewpoint? And whilst there were no animals around the Delabole windfarm (it is fenced) I did stop there and although only a hundred yards away from the nearest two-armed giant, I could hear nothing. Another day, another direction, we stopped for coffee and could view some three-armed giants from the windows; there were a number of Friesians in an adjacent field who seemed undisturbed by their gigantic neighbours. I wonder if the objections belong to the "nimby" syndrome? Do you, as a science fiction fan, live near some such, and do you find them objectionable? Or are you preconditioned to acceptance? Please tell.

The Big Bang



I wrote this piece for ERG 80, some twelve years ago, but in the light of the recent comet strikes on Jupiter, it seemed worth reprinting. After all, when the next one comes along, it may once again be our turn to get in the way. T.J.

THE BIG BANG

Around 7am on June 30th 1906 something unusual happened in the Tunguska region of Siberia. A glowing object flashed across the sky at something like 25 miles a second, followed by a colossal explosion later estimated as the equivalent of 12 kilotons of TNT. It produced ground tremors which were recorded on seismographs 3,000 miles away! Even the air-borne shock wave was picked up at Cambridge in the U.K.

Some witnesses spoke of a huge fireball in the sky. At one point many miles from the event, a herd of reindeer was destroyed and burn damage experienced at 40 miles distant. Afterwards, various sky effects akin to those following the explosion of Krakatoa were seen around the world - with midnight skys glowing as if it were dawn.

Because of the isolated position of the explosion, the primitive post-Revolution transport and then the outbreak of the First World War; it was 1927 before an expedition succeeded in reaching the site. Setting off in February, it finally reached its goal in mid-May, which gives some idea of the distance and the difficult terrain involved. By this time, some of the locals had evolved a new ritual for worshipping a God of Fire.

The scene of the strike was surrounded by fallen trees, all pointing radially outwards from the blast centre - very similar to the devastation at Hiroshima some 20 or so years later. More recent measurements point to an airburst at an altitude of about 5 miles.

So much for the facts. What lies behind them still gives rise to a variety of speculations as to what actually caused the explosion. Later investigations have indicated increased radioactivity in the area as well as a 1% above normal amount of Carbon 14 in tree rings for the year following the incident. An atomic bomb was postulated but against the nuclear theory, an Israeli scientist has pointed out that a meteor strike of these proportions would have approached solar temperatures and released sufficient neutrons to create the extra Carbon 14 recorded.

Suggestions put forward to explain the disaster are many and varied. One idea is that the Earth was struck by a giant comet. Opponents of this theory object on the ground that a comet of such magnitude would have been observed early during its approach phase.

To counter this, the Russian scientist, Ferenkov estimated that if the object had come in from the direction of the Sun, it might have been almost impossible to detect. Another objection to the comet theory is that unlike the mile-wide Meteor Crater in Arizona, the much larger Tunguska explosion did not produce a crater at all! Leonid Kulik who led the early expeditions, recorded that the area was studded with numerous, small, water-filled holes, but that there was no sign of a crater.

Another idea was that Earth had been on the receiving end of a giant laser beam fired from another planet. Some sources even suggest that a wandering 'Black Hole' grazed the Earth before vanishing into space. An alternative view is that a small meteor of contra-terrene matter ('anti-matter') caused the damage. This would at least explain the lack of any solid remains at the site.

One writer of off-beat articles came up with the bizarre idea that political exiles in Siberia had been given enough freedom and materials to create and explode a nuclear device long before the Allies did so in WW2. It must also have been a great deal lighter, as his theory called for it to have been hoisted aloft by a giant kite in order to account for the airburst.

The Russian chess player and SF writer, Dr. Alexander Kazentsov came up with the proposal that the object was a nuclear-powered, alien spacecraft which crashed and exploded. His theory caught the imagination of many, including Frank Edwards in his book., 'Stranger Than Science'. He tends to be rather careless with his facts however, having Kazentsov going on the 1927 expedition to add verisimilitude to his story. As far as I can trace, Kazentsov did not go on any of the expeditions. There was an abortive one in 1921, and others in 1927, 1928, 1929, 1939, 1960 and 1961. Kazentsov was only 21 at the time of the 1927 expedition, not graduating from the Tomsk Institute until 1930. However, in support of the alien spacecraft theory, is the flight plan plotted by witnesses. This indicates that the object made two sharp course changes during its descent -- but considering the lapse of several years between event and reports, as well as the low, peasant-type population of the area, such evidence leaves much to be desired.

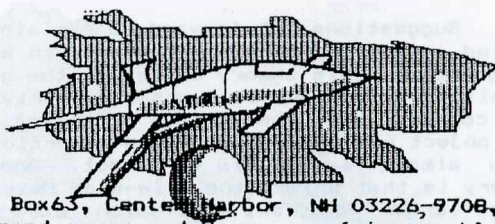
Controversy still rages. Two British scientists now claim the object was a loosely bound collection of rocks, dust and ice which totally disintegrated on contact - thus accounting for the numerous, water-filled holes.

Whatever it was, we may never know, unless of course, you care to join me on a trip to the Tunguska plateau.

THE END

Scientists (and other) are now lobbying for a full scale skymatch and preparations to blow up or divert anything heading Earthwards. Considering current technology, this is akin to facing a charging elephant with a pea-shooter. Dinosaurs, move over.

Fanzines



NIEKAS.44 Ed. Meskys, RR2 Box 63, Center Harbor, NH 03226-9708, USA. has wrap round, two-colour card cover and 90 pages of impeccably laid out and well-illustrated pages. A serious and constructive literary zine containing musings by Ed., A Kipling symposium, loads of reviews, a column by Sam Moskowitz, an appreciation of Zenna Henderson, comment on sorcery and scrolls and lots of LOCs. A superlative production. Get it for \$15.00 for four (\$19.00 overseas).

IDEA.8 44 PAGE, Twiltone, mimeo. A well-drawn 3-colour cover, good art. A couple of personal news columns, a Convention fantasy, a piece on house-buying, some verse, a spot of pornography and a load of LOCs. Nicely produced and illustrated, get it for the usual from Geri Sullivan, 344 Blaisdell Ave.S., Minneapolis, MN 55408-4315, USA

THE RELUCTANT FAMULUS 22, 44 pages from Tom Sadler, 422 W. Maple Ave, Adrian, MI 49221-1627, USA. Striking Turner cover, excellent narrative lead-in (of the kind Vince Clarke used to do), Book reviews, an article on egoboo, my 'Sock' Davidge parody, a short story and fanzine reviews. Lots of varied artwork. Nice and cheerful issue.

THE MENTOR.84 Ron Clarke, PO Box K940, Haymarket, NSW 2000, AUSTRALIA. 46 beautifully produced a4 pages. Articles on swords and Aussie Fan History. Three excellent stories, four entertaining columns, reviews and lotsa LOCs - oh yes, there's top notch artwork and some stuff called poetry. Highlights are Darlington on Captain Condor and Verran on magazines. The mag strikes a neat medium between lighthearted and S&C. Get it on sub. \$AS.12, USA \$10 for 4 issues.

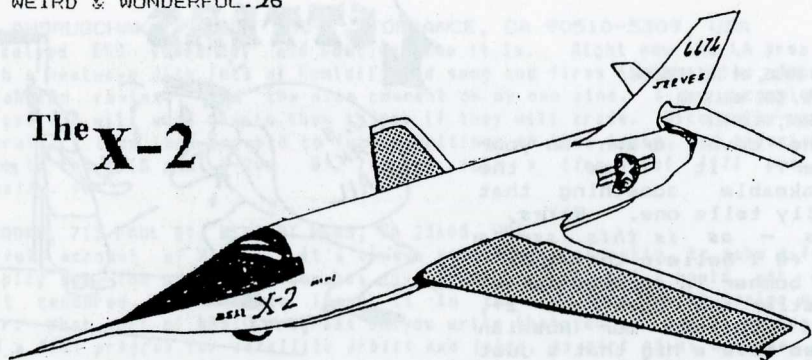
ETHEL THE AARDVARK.54 18, A4pp. is the OO of the Melbourne SF Club, PO Box 212, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia. Con and Club news, cartoons, Officer's reports, trade list, Computer Games, Ditmar & ASFMA voting, writing fiction, club photos and LOCs. Lighthearted and in-groupish, but fun. For the usual or \$20 for 6 issues.

IDEA.8 44 mimeoed pages from Geri Sullivan, 3444 Blaisdell Ave.S., Minneapolis, MN 55408-3358, USA pieces on dogs, travel, Con Francisco report, house buying, a visit to Minneapolis. Loads of very good LOCs, plus excellent and well matched artwork, some in colour. Only duff bits are an obnoxious 'story' with nothing to recommend it and a typical fan 'poem'. Another fanzine pub'd for fun. Presumably available for 'the usual'

DRIVEL AND DROOL.3 from Mike D. Siddall, 133 Duke St., Askam & Furness, Cumbria LA16 7AE 38 very well produced pages. 2 pages on a seducer's technique, comments on the view from Mike's window, Eastercon reports, does fandom have an elite? A hefty LOCcol, and a piece on 'George'; plus other snippets. This'll be a gudun when it finds its feet.

GROGGY.37 Eric Mayer and Mary Long, Box 17143, Rochester, New York, NY 14617, USA. A slender, photocopied grab-bag of personal comment by the editors, experiences at a book-signing, orienteering, High School Reunion, eating out, and some rather dark photographs.

The X-2



First proposed as a development of the X-1 series to investigate swept-wing and aerodynamic heating in the Mach 3.5, 130,000 ft. altitude range, the Bell X-2 was up-rated to become an entirely new design. December 1945 saw a contract signed for the design and production of two X-2 aircraft. The aircraft had a fuselage length of 37ft., and a wingspan of 32ft.

Early in the project, two P-63 King Cobra fighters were fitted with swept wings to test out their low-speed handling. To alter the wing cross-section, balsa wood strips were glued to their leading edges. At one stage, a variable-sweep wing was considered but abandoned due to its complexity. Another interesting step was Project Blossom III which involved fitting a mock-up of the X-2 nose section to a V-2 rocket to try out its re-entry characteristics.

The X-2 finally emerged as a fairly conventional looking aeroplane - for a swept-wing, rocket-powered design. The main difference to a casual observer being the landing gear. This consisted of a single nose-wheel, a large central skid and two smaller, wing-tip skids.

Air launched from its B-50 mother ship, the first glide-test of an X-2 went according to plan until the landing, whereupon the central landing skid collapsed. This failure happened on nearly every flight until Bell engineers replaced it with one having a shorter support strut.

Because of development trouble and late delivery of the Curtiss-Wright XLR-25 rocket motor, the test programme was delayed for three years. The first powered flight ended in disaster when the X-2 exploded whilst airborne in the mother ship, killing the pilot and an observer in the B-50. A series of such explosions of rocket motors had destroyed three of the X-1 aircraft. The fault was finally traced to an Ulmer leather gasket. The leather was impregnated with a compound which exploded when jarred if in the presence of liquid oxygen.

Some 20 test flights were carried out and despite various problems such as the air explosion, faulty landing skids and a small fire when airborne, the X-2 established several records and provided much useful data on high-altitude, high-speed flight, as well on the exotic materials required to withstand the aerodynamic heating. The maximum altitude reached was 126,000ft. and the maximum speed was Mach 3.2. The second X-2 which achieved these records was finally destroyed when it went out of control during a test flight. The pilot ejected in the cockpit nose-cone, but for some reason, failed to release from the capsule and was killed when it crashed to Earth.

ALAN BURNS, 19 THE CRESCENT,
KINGS RD. STM. WOLLSAND,
NLYNESIDE, M28 7RE

Was the cover drawn on your computer? It has the unmistakeable something that generally tells one. @>Yes, it was - as is this issue's cover. @ I believe the Yanks have a bomber in service called the Hustler that does Mach 2+, and I believe our Russian comrades have a Mig that's just as fast, if not faster. @>The B-58 Hustler is a 4-jet, delta wing credited with 1302mph. The Mig-31 'Foxhound' is given as 1520mph

@ Marvel SF, spicy SF indeed. I wonder if Marvel 111 was as spicy as 1 and 2. I recall the sensation when Astounding had a girl wearing a bikini on the front. @>A furry one, wasn't it? @ Pity those days of prudery seem to be open for ever. Ah for the days of variety, Variety Playhouse, Ronald Frankau, Tommy Handley, or Gillie Potter. I cannot think of any comedian now that causes me the hoots of laughter of those dear dead programmes long past recall.

LETTERS



VINCE CLARKE, 16 WENDOVER WAY, WELLING, KENT DA16 2BN I don't quite see the point of detailing the stories in *Marvel Science Stories* - how many readers will rush down to their nearest SF dealer and pay £10 or more for the issue. @>None, but older readers may get a buzz of nostalgia and newer ones an idea of what has gone before. @ But the effect on one fan of the day (mid-1938) seemed considerable. Reviewing it in *NOVAE TERRAE*, Ted Carnell referred to the fact the *Marvel* had brought back old-time artist Frank R. Paul and said, "If you're a mouse and not a man, you'll buy the mag for that alone - if the reverse, place the mag in the ice-box...and get in with it". The 'sex-trash' (Carnell) policy of *Marvel* saw it sell 9 issues, plus another five when it changed title to *Marvel Tales* and featured even more sex n' sadism. As far as I can see, it had no effect on either fans or fiction.

TED HUGHES, 10 KENMORE RD., WHITEFIELD, MANCHESTER M25 6ER

I'm surprised to hear you've decided to sell your SF collection. ASF 1930 TO 1994, I bet it hurts. What's decided you, Terry? @>I seldom read 'em nowadays and at 71, I reckon it's time to start sorting things out. @ It's one thing to grow fed up with the current *Analog*, but it's another to sell of your memories. Will you continue to read *Analog* when you've sold your collections? @>No, it's too dull and bland @ I quit collecting some time ago, the yarns are no longer of interest. More than that, SF has changed anyway .. and so I'm afraid, have I. Only the covers retain their magic for me. As time passes, they grow more fascinating - and your photos of those early *Astoundings* - now albumised have satisfied a personal craving to have all of them. Your cover for 126 was quite a puzzle until I realised it was an SF story in pictorial form. I presume you drew it with your new equipment? @>Yep, *Windows Paintbrush* @ I liked the piece on *Marvel Stories*. I've had that mag as long as you have and until you mentioned it, I never realised the blonde on the cover was towing a red-hot ball. As you say, the stories were daring in the extreme - for fourteen-year-olds.

ANDY ANDRUSCHAK, PO BOX 5309,, TORRANCE, CA 90510-5309, USA

Received ERB yesterday and most welcome it is. Right now the LA area is going through a heatwave with lots of humidity and smog and fires in the hills. Thanks for the fanzine reviews, and the nice comment on my own zine. I see a couple there I don't get and will send off to them to see if they will trade. Nice write-up on the X-1 craft. I do look forward to future writings on this topic, and especially when you get to the X-15 and X-20. @> It may take a time, but I'll get there eventually. f@

NED BROOKS, 713 PAUL ST. NEWPORT NEWS, VA 23605, USA

Wonderful account of Marvel - it's always possible, apparently, to make a few bucks with spicy sex. The product seldom has any literary merit, but I would not care to see it censored. Better to leave it in the open than let it fester under the counter. What sort of BASIC programs do you write that you can sell? @> Way back, I sold a ZX81 program for satellite orbits and later, as part of an article, one for titling a home video. f@ I love that about tying a piece of buttered toast to the back of Schrodinger's cat. Fascinating book reviews, hard to tell if I would want to read any of the books. Most books I look into, even if the content is interesting, the style is a great impediment to real enjoyment.

MIKE ASHLEY, 4 THISTLEBANK, WALTERSLADE, CHATHAM, KENT ME5 8AD

I've always been interested in the extent of the fuss caused when MARVEL first appeared. I suspect that the fuss was limited to a small clique in fandom, though I'm not quite sure whether this was the SF purist (Who I imagine by then has already become a reader of Astounding) or the younger crew reading Amazing and the newly revamped Thrilling Wonder suddenly discovering this more spicy variant of SF and the outcry coming from their parents. Did you cause a fuss at the time, or your parents?

@> No fuss either way, I just thought, 'This isn't MY SF' f@ Marvel was of course following a trend of its own, having grown out of a totally different pulp line of weird-terror pulps like Dime Mystery, Horror Stories and Terror Tales., which had sold well. @> An uncredited (Gillings?) article in the fanzine TOMORROW, Summer 1938 says, in part, "...shocked out of their habitual calm by the 'plenty of sex' nature of 'Avengers Of Space', fans soon made this the most talked of story of the year." f@

ETHEL LINDSAY, 69 BARRY RD., CARNOUSTIE ANGUS, SCOTLAND DD7 7QQ

I would hope that Ken Slater would tell the full story of his encounter in Glasgow. Sounds very interesting. Your moan about the lack of real variety shows has me also moaning about to-days "music" @> There ain't any such animal. f@ One never hears a saxophone now, or a trumpet - only the guitar and the drum have taken over completely. One has to turn to opera to find a singer who just stands still and sings. As for the dancers, they move everything but their feet. At the Summer Show here by our local music society we had dancers who tap-danced and singers whose songs you could sing along with. Do you remember 'Anything Goes'? Ah, we could do with another Cole Porter. @> Not half. My most cherished recording is his 'Begin The Beguine, played by Joe Loss and sung by the incomparable 'Chick' Henderson. It's THE definitive recording. f@

ROGER WADDINGTON, 4 COMMERCIAL ST., NORTON, MALTON, N.YORKSHIRE YO17 9ES

On a 'Touch Of Variety': among all the moaners and screamers there used to be a group called 'Pop Will Eat Itself', and that I suggest is what has happened to TV entertainment. There was a recent article, how the arrival of TV proved the death of many comedians. Before, a comedian could play an act in Bournemouth, take it up to Blackpool or across to Scarborough and he could bring the same act and jokes out every time. But one appearance on TV before a nationwide audience and unless he was very lucky, that would be the end of it. With speciality acts, that would be the same; see one, you've seen them all. @> True to a point, but you could say the same about football, snooker, golf, singer or instrumentalist or whatever. There's always those 'will it go wrong' or 'it's nice to see/hear that again' feelings when watching a tight-rope walker, juggler, acrobat, knife-thrower and so on. f@

BRIDGET HARDCASTLE, 13 LINDFIELD GARDENS, HAMPSTEAD, LONDON NW3 6PX

One of the things I like most about zines is when you sit down to dutifully read (why do split infinitives sound so right compared to correct grammar?) an article about something tedious and boring, like aeroplanes @> *Sacrilege!* @> and find yourself fascinated by the end of it. I have discovered lots of new subjects that way. Keep it up! Your book reviews also have a habit of making me want to go out and buy everything in them, even if it's something I'd not be seen dead reading. Does anyone still watch variety shows? Our household always seems to find something better to do. @> *Anything is better to do than watching 'variety' shows.* @>

RICHARD NEWSOME, 281 FLATBUSH AVE. #1-B, BROOKLYN, NY 11217, USA

The PC Paintbrush does not have a fine enough dot pitch to produce good fanzine art. The lines are jagged and the shadings ugly. The type in your return address is near illegible. @> Paintbrush is easier than pen and ink. The address was my fault, I reduced it too much. @> With respect to Ken Slater's remarks about ANALOG, what do you and Ken think of G. David Nordley? I think he has one of the most appalling prose styles seen in decades, combined with a ridiculous, Tom Clancyish sense of melodrama, but he certainly does know his science and holds your interest that way. A throwback to the era when you needed a slide rule in one hand to follow the typical ANALOG story. @> For my money, ALL Analog 'authors' need courses in plotting and climax. Yarns are bland with cop-out endings. @> I rather question his calculation, in 'Into The Miranda Rift' that a man falling 20mph stands a good chance of being killed.

PHILIP WILTSHIRE, 2 CHILTERN VIEW RD., UXBRIDGE, MIDDX UB8 2PA

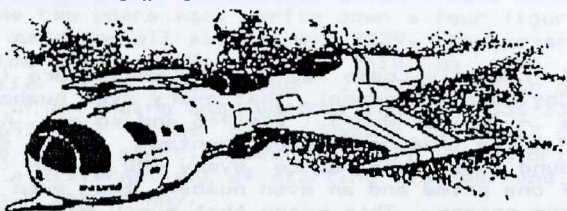
'Words of Wisdom' brought a few chuckles. The 'Marvel' article I thought was 'spot on old bean'. The article on a touch of variety; on TV you don't get the old variety shows like the black and white minstrels and Billy Cotton and his band. Now all you seem to get are things like Noel Edmonds which seem a lot of shouting and a man dressed up in a spotty costume being clumsy and destructive. Still we're lucky for we have a few theatres around the area that put on variety.

ALAN SULLIVAN, 30 ASH RD., STRATFORD, LONDON E15 1HL

WEIRD & WONDERFUL. A short but glorious life for the first X-planes. I look forward to reading about the generations that followed. It's easy to ignore the experimental aircraft, but where would the aerospace industry be without them? You can only do so much in simulation, even with the latest computerised techniques. Eventually you're going to have to put a test model together and get some daring/suicidal soul to try it out. The Dynasphere advert I have not seen, but was probably one of a series of ads for Apple Mac computers. @> Not an ad, it was an article and photograph of the actual vehicle with driver and passenger. @> GENERAL CHUNTERING, on Shaver/Palmer Science: Harmful ash filtering down from the sun, as opposed to burns and melanomas produced by unshielded UV radiation? H'm, an interesting parallel if nothing else. Did they have any other such ideas? A TOUCH OF VARIETY. I fear I know little of the original 'variety' shows. The nearest I get to stuff like that would be 'The Good Old Days'. Most modern variety stuff is pretty awful. No imagination. I don't think there is a total lack of audience participation. Several shows doing the stage circuit (Rocky Horror, Return to the Forbidden Planet and others, have varying degrees of audience participation in them - and people do respond. @> The so-called 'variety' shows totally lack variety - just strident voiced lollipop lickers. @>

To The Stars ?

13



One of the staples of Science Fiction has long been travel to the stars. To get round the awkward fact that the nearest one is over four light years away (and probably has no planets), writers have produced a variety of ways to make such a trip. Mannsches Drives, Bergenholes, space warps, impulse power and a host of other 'inventions' have been offered. All these make (sometimes) for entertaining reading, but we have also had various-factual suggestions as to how the job might be done for real. One way is to go through the event horizon of a black hole and enter another universe - ignore the tidal effects as you try this one. Then there's the generation starship with new personnel being born along the way, it has even been suggested that the ship be powered by a series of exploding A-bombs behind its stern.

Much as I would like to believe that humans will one day, 'boldly go' to the stars, I have a very strong conviction that it will never happen - unless physics comes up with a way round Einstein's famous equations to permit travel faster than light. Take the basics. Nearest star 4.3 light years. Ignore all relativistic effects on time and mass, just assume you can accelerate steadily at 1g. It will take just under a year to reach c, the speed of light. In that time the craft will have travelled about half a light year. Slowing down again will take the same, and doing the other 3.3 light years will add three more years. Total one-way time about five years and round trip time over ten.

Even assuming an instant acceleration to light speed, that means a round trip of eight and a half years, apart from any stop over time, and no guarantee that Proxima Centauri has any planets to visit. What sort of fuel and food supplies would be needed for eight years or more? How big a ship would be needed just to carry it all? What equipment can operate fault-free all that time? The only feasible answer is a craft big enough to house fuel, food and enough crops and animals to sustain the travellers in a close-cycle ecology. We're into the realms of great improbability right there.

Then there's the problem of sustaining crew sanity for such a length of time when penned inside a tin can. I found three and a half years in India a hell of a long time, and I could move around the place, breathe fresh air and meet new faces. Submariners have problems being isolated for a month, imagine the problem of ten years in the can.

Einstein's equations show that as velocity increases, the mass does likewise, thus needing more fuel. In my recent story in ERG, I pointed out that this meant fuel mass also increased and as $E=MC^2$, its energy must also increase. That might solve one problem, but my other point concerned the time dilation. As the craft nears c, time moves ever more slowly. At c, it STOPS! In other words, neither man nor machine can turn off the space drive, slow the ship, or decide to come home. Everything will be in suspended animation and the journey would continue for ever. Now THERE'S a poser.

To me, these seem insuperable problems, I wouldn't dream of saying that they will never be solved -- but I doubt it. Bear 'em in mind next time your hero leaps into his space craft and warps to Aldebaran IV in half an hour.

PRIME CONCERN

I recently came across the conjecture (in 'The Emperor's New Mind', by Roger Penrose), that every even number is the sum of two primes - thus, $8=5+3$, $24=19+5$ and so on. After a few tries, that seemed to be true, so I experimented. What did emerge as I played around was that since every ODD number (if big enough) is composed of one prime and an even number, the even part can split into two more primes. This means that every odd number is the sum of several primes.

Then it suddenly struck me that the original statement that every even number can be split into the sum of two primes, was woefully understated. EVERY number can be split into the sum of two or more primes since every number is the sum of a cartload of primes 1,2,3,5 etc. In its simplest form, every number can be the sum of $1+1+1+1+1...$. Or perhaps, $3+3+3+...$ ending with +2 or +1, and so on.

If you haven't a computer, you can use the 'sieve of Eratosthenes' to find primes. Write the numbers 1 to 100 (more if you have enough stamina), Circle 1 (The first prime), now circle the first number which can only be divided by itself (2) then strike out all its multiples. Repeat the procedure for the next unmarked number and continue until all numbers are circled or crossed out. For example, circle 2, then strike out 4,6,8,10 etc. Circle 3 and delete 6,9,12 etc.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 |
| 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 |
| 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 |
| 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 | 86 | 87 | 88 | 89 | 90 | 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 |

When you have finished, the circled numbers are all primes. Here are the first thirty-six.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 11 | 13 | 17 | 19 | 23 | 29 | 31 | 37 | 41 |
| 43 | 47 | 53 | 59 | 61 | 67 | 71 | 73 | 79 | 83 | 89 | 91 | 97 | 101 |
| 103 | 107 | 109 | 113 | 119 | 127 | 131 | 137 | | | | | | |

The gaps between these primes go ...

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 4 |
| 6 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Tantalisingly near a regular pattern, but not quite. You can't use it to predict the next prime, nor can you simply double a prime and add 1. This works fine for 1,2,3, and 5, but breaks down for 7 ($7+7+1=15$, NOT a prime). Simply adding two primes doesn't work either ($3+5=8$). $1+2+3=6$, so summing three primes is no use. So is there an easy (?) way to find higher primes? If there is, I don't know it, but once you start playing it's like the schoolboy trying to trisect an angle - it's been proved impossible, but there's always that optimistic thought, "Maybe if I just tried"

If you like wasting time, see if you can find a formula for primes. At least it's more fun than prime time television.

Here's another number curiosity which I came across in the Beebug Magazine some ten years ago. Write down a four figure number, (don't cheat and make 'em all alike), say 7239. Now re-arrange the figures in descending order, 9732. Reverse this to give 2379 and subtract the smaller from the larger .. 9732-2379 to give 7353. Repeat the process of arranging and subtraction - 7533-3357 gives 4176. Repeat, 7641-1467 gives 6174. Repeat 7641-1467 gives 6174 again! .. and there you're stuck, repeating will always bring you to 6174. Try it with a different set of starting figures and see for yourself .. but don't ask me why.

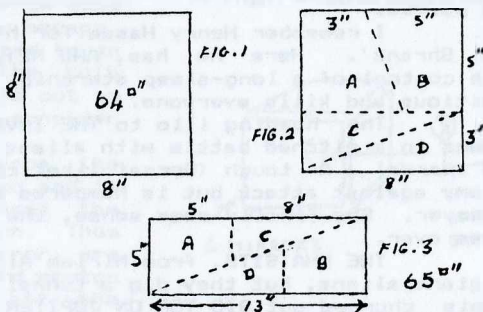
In the long-lost years when I studied calculus, I noticed the peculiar fact that if you take the formula for the volume of a sphere $V = \frac{4}{3}\pi r^3$ and differentiate V with respect to r , you get $4\pi r^2$ which happens to be the formula for the surface area of a sphere. Differentiate again and you get $8\pi r$ which doesn't seem to have any significance at all other than being four times the diameter of the original sphere. Oh well, can't all make great discoveries.

I ran the following in ERG several years ago, but they may be of interest to newer readers.

Tell someone to write down the numbers 1 to 9 missing out 8, thus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9

Now ask which figure is written the worst. Whatever your victim says, multiply it (in your head), by 9 and then tell him to multiply the whole string by the result. Thus if he says "Five", Nine times five gives forty-five, so tell him to multiply 12345679 by 45. The result will be a string of fives, whereupon you explain that this was to give him practice in making better fives. The trick works whichever number is selected as the bad one. To find out why, try multiplying 12345679 by 9 and it becomes obvious.

Then take the square in FIG.1 Being 8" on a side gives it an area of 64 sq. ins. Cut it up along the dotted line to the measurements given in FIG.2 and re-arrange the pieces as in FIG.3. This gives a rectangle with an area of 65 sq inches. Where has the extra square inch come from? Warning, this one is a trick.



If you want to puzzle people, tell them to write down a three figure number without telling you what it is, then repeat it, thus:- 234 234234. You can then tell them, without seeing what they have written, that the longer number is divisible by seven. Once they have checked that out, tell 'em it is also divisible by eleven, and finally, that it is also divisible by thirteen. There's a very simple explanation, but I'll leave you to find it out.

I know some people switch off at the sight of numbers, but I hope these simple steps will show you they can be fun -- and easy.

SPACE STORIES

The first issue of SPACE STORIES APPEARED IN OCTOBER 1952 with an Emsh cover which made me wonder what shape the astronauts would be in after dashing up a long, steep stairway to their spacecraft. Inside, the Contents Page listed a Novel, two Novellas, three short stories and several 'features'.

The opening Novel, MAN OF TWO WORLDS, by Bryce Walton started off as if it were part 2 of a serial as a Martian-born colonist investigates a pyramid and the villain's men attack. Racial memories show a way of escape through doors to other worlds, to swashbuckling, mind-transfer and cyclic time. Yecch!

CONTINUED STORY by Margaret St.Clair has a thief steal a pair of DIY kits from a vanishing shop. Their use brings terror and haunted by their alien seller, he tries to surrender to the police.

I remember Henry Hasse for his 1936 yarn in Amazing, 'He Who Shrank'. Here he has, AND RETURN, about a man who awakens in sole control of a long-sleep starship, finds he is a robot, becomes ambitious and kills everyone.

The heading illo to THE INVADERS by Gordon R. Dickson shows humans in a pitched battle with aliens. Both sides are using guns and swords! A tough (Dorsai-like) commander prepares to defend the colony against attack but is hampered by a do-good, nubile Government Observer. She finally sees sense, the aliens are beaten off and love takes over.

THE WHATSITS, from Miriam Allen de Ford has humans captured by giant aliens, but they dig a tunnel and escape. Ho hum. Noel Loomis churned out BIG TOP ON JUPITER to allow a ten-year-old boy to save a circus from destruction.

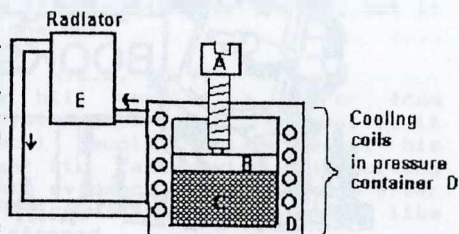
All good, clean, pot-boiling hackstuff. To fill out the 130 page issue. the features were 'Perils Of Space' warning future spacemen of meteorite danger to their spaceships. 'Blast Off' was the opening editorial plug. 'When Did It Happen' was a short quiz and 'SF Book Corner' ran five juvenile book reviews. Best part of the issue was the interior art by Poulton, Orban, Emsh and Schomburg. It puts Analog's current stuff in the shade.



TWO OUTSTANDING INVENTIONS

Zero-Energy heating unit

When screw A is turned, driving down the plunger B, this compresses material C, which has a high coefficient of expansion. This pressure causes C to heat up, thus further increasing the pressure and in consequence causing further expansion were it not for the heat transfer coils built into the walls of the pressure vessel D. These contain a liquid which circulates by convection, through the radiator E, thus stabilising the heat increase at an amount determined by the initial setting of pressure screw A. Slackening off this screw effectively turns off the heating system. The whole unit is cheap to manufacture, portable, easily controlled and has no running costs. If the radiator is replaced by a heat engine, the device achieves perpetual motion.



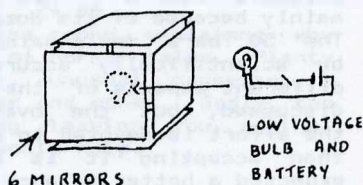
A possible military use would be to dispense with the cooling system and coils, this would allow an ever increasing pressure/heat cycle which would lead to an explosion, the power of which would be determined by the strength of the pressure vessel D.

Six mirrors are arranged in the form of a cube but leaving narrow gaps at all edges to allow light to escape.

Inside is a 4.5v bulb connected to an external dry battery. When the bulb is turned on, light is radiated out to the six mirrors. Briefly consider only a pair of mirrors.

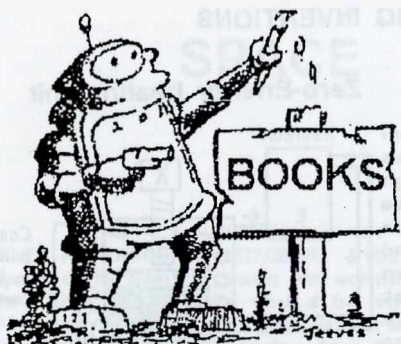
One light photon comes from the bulb, hits the first mirror and is reflected back. As it passes the bulb, it joins a second photon. Thus TWO photons hit the second mirror, are reflected back, collect a third photon as they pass the bulb. These hit the first mirror and SIX photons come back.

A High Output Light Unit



This process is repeated simultaneously in all six mirrors, so the light rapidly builds brighter and brighter. Since there is a small amount of absorption in the mirrors and in the bulb mounting, there is a small amount of light loss. Nevertheless, the build up is rapid and ample light escapes the slits to illuminate the average room. The device is ideal for sites remote from main power sources - tented camps, third world countries, remote gardens, outhouses and the like.

Here again, a military use is possible. If the device is made without the light-escape slits, the build up continues undiminished until the unit eventually explodes as a 'light bomb'.



STAR WARS Dave Wolverton
Bantam £9.99

Leia is contemplating an Alliance with the Hapes Empire ruled by a Queen Mother who wants Leia to marry her son, Prince Isolder. Han Solo secretly loves Leia, so to foil the betrothal, he lures her to a distant planet in the hope of winning her hand. Luke Skywalker returns from a mission seeking lost Jedi knowledge, sets off after the missing couple only to run up against a

batch of Force-using witches and a powerful enemy. Action-type SF in the old pulp style at half the price of most modern hardcovers. Star Wars fans will lap it up.

ONLY VISITING THIS PLANET: THE ART OF DANNY FLYNN

Paper Tiger £10.95 A brief Introduction by Arthur C. Clarke, then you're into a stellar exhibition of full-colour, scintillating artwork. Fantasy themes predominate, but there are also designs for computer games boxes, cassette jackets, etc. A nice touch is that each painting has a capsule note on size, medium and its history. Collected into themes: - Pastoral Fantasy, S&S, 'The Dark Side', Space Machines, Other Worlds, and 'Tackling a Commission'. Interspersed among the art and ably enhancing it, is a biographical account of Flynn's career, written by Nigel Suckling. 120 large pages of delight by an artist who can really bring alien creatures to life.

THE CREATION OF TOMORROW: 50 Years Of Science Fiction Paul A. Carter
Columbia \$12.95 This is an oldie (1977) I picked up in Hay-On-Wye, mainly because of its dozen or so art reproductions from the pulps. The '50 Years' deals mainly with 1926-1940 and first asks if SF should be scientifically accurate and predictive. Then come chapters on different aspects of the genre, various yarns and magazines are discussed, but the overall theme shows no love for its subject. All the effort is devoted to displaying its fallacies and failings rather than accepting it is designed primarily to entertain. Pity, I expected a better balance from a Professor of History.

A BRIDGE OF YEARS Robert Charles Wilson N.E.L. £5.99

Tom Winter moves into the country and buys an old house in incredibly well preserved state; it even cleans dirty dishes. Investigation reveals swarms of tiny nanomechanisms and a hidden tunnel which connects with 1962. Tom decides he would rather move to live there rather in 1989, but there's a cybernetic killer guarding the tunnel who sets off after Tom, and there's also a strange 'time ghost' haunting the gateway. Gradually all the complicated threads are unravelled and lead to a fast-paced climax. I couldn't put this one down after reading the first page. Recommended.

THE TREK UNIVERSAL INDEX Thomas Maxwell Boxtree £9.99

Large size, 150 pages and arranged into five sections:- Planets and Places, Aliens, Character Index, Spaceships and Artifacts, and a fifth section covering everything else. To round off, there's a seven-page Index. Each has an alphabetical listing with explanations or definitions of what you might want to know about Star Trek (old or new) and Deep Space Nine. Sadly, no illustrations or photos, but if you're a devoted Trekker, check this one out.

THE FORBIDDEN ZONE Whitley Strieber N.E.L. £5.99

Something screaming under a grassy hill heralds a horror from another dimension, released by a physics experiment. Gradually, it extends tentacles to take over the local people. Brian Kelly, his wife Loi and reporter Ellen must fight it. Fast-moving and exciting but improbable characters - Ellen hunts evidence in the woods after escaping one attack, and eight months pregnant Loi romps around like a two year old before the monster is stopped.

THE CYGNET AND THE FIREBIRD Patricia McKillip Pan £4.99

I'll quote the jacket. "The firebird comes at night, a magnificent creature whose magical cry seemed to transform objects at random. Gifted with powers of her own Meguet of Ro Holding tries to reach out to the bird. At Moonrise, the bird itself changes, becoming human; a prince cursed by dark magic. Vowing to help him, Meguet is carried away on alien winds .. to the Luxour Desert where a sorcerer's war rages. Where invisible dragons cast shadows" Intrigued?

WORLD WAR IN THE BALANCE Harry Turtledove, Hodder & Stoughton £16.99

Right in the middle of World War 2, lizard-like aliens arrived to conquer Earth for their Emperor. They arrive expecting to find a mediaeval world, as shown by their survey of 800 years ago. They get a rude shock at the progress made and a worse one as humans come up even more quickly with new weapons such as jet planes and atomic bombs. First in a series, rather episodic, but an excellent opening to a new series which reminds one of a blend of a brainier version of Russell's aliens and those of Hubbard's 'Invaders' Plan'

DARKLANDS TWO Editor, Nicholas Royle N.E.L. £4.99

Two Introductions, one promising 23 yarns, the second explaining why there are only fourteen in this collection of horror tales. Plenty of variety - a train ride, possessive father, unusual cassette, a bicycle, a stormy night, a sex-mad hitcher and other. Sadly, the stories are almost all of the unsecured ending leaving you asking, "So what". More plot and less pyrotechnics would help.

DEMONS DON'T DREAM Piers Anthony N.E.L. £4.99

Sixteen-year-old Dug's computer game takes him into the world of Xanth where snake-woman Nada Naga helps him defeat Bigotry and other hazards. Young Kim, also enters and outwits ogres, aided by Jenny Elf. They face other problems before discovering that the game was set up by rival Demons. 16th. in the Xanth series where anything goes including outrageous puns such as 'Fairy Nuff' and 'censer-ship'.

BATTLETECH: D.R.T. James D. Long ROC £3.99

Another in the series set in the 31st Century in which the invading Clans come marauding in their giant battle machines. The mercenary Black Thorn warriors latest assignment puts them on garrison duty - which proves hectic when they find themselves against the Clans. Much fighting in huge mechanical devices. If you're a Battletech addict, you don't need to know any more.

THE TRIKON DECEPTION Ben Bova & Bill Pogue N.E.L. £5.99

The International satellite, Trikon is intended to carry out genetic research to save an Earth dying from pollution. However, its scientists operate under a mix of rivalries, political masters, blackmail and espionage. Station boss, Dan Tighe's job is made even tougher by an idiot who plants a bug in the computer system, another who pushes drugs and on Earth, a British diplomat conducting his own dirty work. Hardcore SF, unlikely, unlovable characters, but the plot has more twists than a corkscrew and holds you all the way.

THE PRIEST Thomas M. Disch Millennium £16.99

When the Catholic Church opens a secret 'prison' for young unmarried pregnant girls, they put pederastic Father Pat Bryce in charge, aided by a couple of nerotics. A former altar-boy victim blackmails Bryce into having a Satanic face tattooed on his chest. He faints under the needle and changes personalities with the equally venal, 13th Century, Bishop Sylvanus. Ending up facing the Inquisition, he finds SF writer Boscase is another victim. A multi-layer plot which keeps you guessing all the way. Catholic priests don't come out well, so if you might be offended, be warned.

BEHOLD THE MAN Mike Moorcock Phoenix £9.99

A trade-size collection of three novels. In 'Behold the Man', time traveller Karl Glogauer returns to Biblical times, replaces Jesus and is crucified. 'Constant Fire' is the saga of sex-crazy Mavis Ming and Emmanuel Bloom. 'Breakfast In The Ruins' again features time-traveller Glogauer, this time in various countries and periods, a crucified hero who must be immortal. Moorcock isn't my cup of tea, he creates excellent situations, but then jumps somewhere else

SHADOWRUN: FADE TO BLACK Nyx Smith ROC £3.99

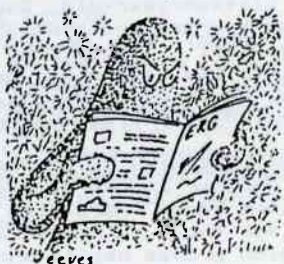
Set in the violent, lawless Newark city ruled by gangs and inhabited by orcs, trolls, elves and magicians. Rico and his helpers are hired to recapture a kidnapped scientist. The job is done, but then things go awry as their man (and his wife) turn out to be not as expected. Hep, street jargon, sadistic violence and impossible situations. Hi-Tech fantasy for lovers of slam-bang-action.

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE Bantam £7.99

A graphic novel sees a childish prank release a deadly gas-producing virus aboard DS9. Commander Sisko also faces unusual behaviour from the Captain of a survey ship and a blackmailing offer of 'help' from a Klingon, oops, Cardassian Commander. There's also a tale of the murder of a visiting Cardassian Officer. Plots are juvenile but it's well drawn though difficult to keep track of who is speaking, or why Sisko often says 'old man' to a woman.

DAGON'S BELL Brian Lumley N.E.L. £4.99

Thirteen tales of horror, some in the Gothic mode and often showing allegiance to the Lovecraft mythology. You get monsters of the deep, a lustful Greek, mutants, a psychic detective, gypsy ghouls, Cthulhu in a sideshow, a hairy monster, a body-switching aunt, a hypnotic whisperer, strange plants, shape changers, a world-ruling cancer, and a roving glass-eye. All excellent yarns and enough variety for all tastes.



THE FAR KINGDOM Allan Cole & Chris Bunch £5.99

"The fabulous lands where wine and song were always sweet .. Janos was a dashing soldier who dabbled in forbidden magic and wove tales of riches and mysteries beyond imagination. Under his spell, Almaric found himself setting out on an adventure worthy of Sinbad or Scheherezade...the quest for *The Far Kingdoms*"

STORM: To Green Angel Tower.2 Tad Williams £5.99

A massive 800+pp, puzzlingly headed 'Book Three of Memory Sorrow and Thorn'. It's the final volume of the saga of the Three Swords of Power and Simon, the ex-kitchen lad in the land of Osten Ard. Elias of Erkyndland has got the aid of Ineluki, the Storm King whose undead hand has reached down out of the Nornfells. To save all, the riddle of the blades must be solved.

GREYLADY Peter Morwood £5.99

Clan Wars.1 "The Albans came to Prytenon five hundred years before the time of Aldric Talvalin, hero of the Horse Lords series. Greylady tells the stirring tale of their arrival and of the struggles of Clan ar' Talvlyn by their prowess at arms and their bold use of the Art Magic."

WIDOWMAKER: A Tale of The Horse Lords Peter Morwood £9.99

230pp, trade-size

Second in the Horse Clans series, 'Bayrd ar' Talvlyn had formed a new Clan - the Talvalins. In his stronghold of Dunrath, Bayrd lived with his clan and his new wife, Eskra, an Elthenek sorceress. Together they must combat other Alban clans. One name was spoken more and more as a leader of their enemies - Kalarr cu Ruruc, the most evil and powerful magician his people had known for generations.

LAKE OF THE LONG SUN Gene Wolfe N.E.L. £4.99

The World (Whorl) Of The Long Sun is the interior of a giant cylindrical generation ship. Its inhabitants have regressed to a mediaeval level. Patera Silk is to lose his parish buildings. To save them, he embarks on a quest which leads him below the surface of his world. Now in paperback, this second in the 'Long Sun' series and Wolfe is at his inventive best.

CALDE OF THE LONG SUN Gene Wolfe Hodder & Stoughton £16.99

Third in the series sees The Goddess Scylla releases prostitute Chenille and Patera Silk emerges from the underground caverns to be acclaimed as the new Calde and leader of a revolution. To complicate matters, the secrets of the starship emerge as the 'Long Sun' itself changes. There's also an opening Index of the characters to help sort them out, but it would help if there was also one for the various creatures and strange terms. After an excellent beginning, the abrupt scene changes managed to lose me, so by the half way mark, I'm not quite sure what was happening. Wolfe fans will love it.

THOR Wayne Smith N.E.L. £4.99

Written from an unusually different viewpoint; that of the Alsatian dog, Thor, who is lover and protector of his human family, 'The Pack'. Then one day 'Uncle Ted' arrives. The family think him a normal human, but Thor knows the truth, Ted is a werewolf come to prey on the Pack. Thor must go against all his instincts to protect his humans. More than a horror story, this one does for dogs what Black Beauty did for horses.

DOCTOR WHO: GALAXY 4 William Emms Titan £4.99

Many early 'Dr. Who' episodes were lost for years, but some have been recovered. This is the script for 'Galaxy 4', first screened in 1965. An Introduction outlines the production background and you also get complete cast and credits lists. Dr. Who, Vicki and Steven land on a strange planet where they are captured by a robot Chumblay, then snatched by English-speaking, Amazon-like Drahvins. The planet is about to explode and the Drahvins plan to steal the escape ship of the native Rills. Can the doctor save the Rill - and his companions?

POWERS THAT BE Anne McCaffrey & Elizabeth Ann Scarborough Corgi £4.99

Major Yana Maddock comes to ice planet Petayabee mainly to heal her lungs but with a secret mission to check reports of strange life forms and vanishing geologists. The colonists are illiterate and exploited, but friendly, helpful and evasive. Gradually, Yana is accepted into the society, learns their skills, finds a lover and solves the mystery. A highly improbable setting for a rather long drawn out fantasy romance with standard McCaffrey female protagonists.

STAR WARS: DARK APPRENTICE Kevin J. Anderson Corgi £4.99

Admiral Daala breaks the peace with the Republic to attack peaceful worlds. At Jedi Academy, student Kyp Durrion practices the Dark Force, then steals a forbidden weapon to destroy the Empire. Confronted by Skywalker, Durrion is aided by the evil of Exar Kun. A Star Wars epic which follows the standard formula of a menace, a confrontation and eventual victory for Skywalker - but this time, he loses out - at least until part three of this trilogy.

QUANTUM LEAP: PRELUDE Ashley McConnell Boxtree £3.99

The opening novel sets the scene for the TV series. Dr. Sam Becket obtains the finance to proceed with plans to build a time-jumping computer. Jealous rival scientist Yen Hsiehuh Lung is conducting undercover espionage (and sabotage) of the project in order to take over. Finally faced with project closure, Becket enters his machine and makes the first Leap, thus leading to future episodes covering his Leaps.

QUANTUM LEAP: KNIGHTS OF THE MORNING STAR Melanie Rawn Boxtree £3.99

The story of another of Becket's Leaps in which he finds himself in the body of 'Sir Percival', a Knight about to fight a sword fight in a mediaeval tournament recreation. There's also the problem of a manuscript's author and the intervention of a secret enemy. This isn't the story immediately following 'Prelude' and assumes much to be already known by the reader or TV watcher. Never having watched the series, I floundered at some of the events and characters.

FOREIGNER C.J. Cherryh Legend £9.99 Trade size

When humans are stranded on the planet of the Atevi they are confined to a single island where Bren Cameron, the 'paichi' is the only human allowed among the Atevi to act as go-between. An assassination attempt sees him moved into isolation and kept incommunicado. Further attempts follow in a web of intrigue and mystery. (Why do Cherryh's characters shower or bathe so often?) Slow-moving and introspective but excellent an excellent 'first contact' yarn with credible aliens. It draws you in, you care for the characters, only the ending disappoints.

STAR TREK ADVENTURES: PLANET OF JUDGEMENT Joe Haldeman Titan £4.50

When a rogue planet circled by a miniature sun, is detected, Kirk's landing party is trapped. Spock mounts a rescue mission which is also caught when shuttles and phasers misbehave on a world where physics has new rules. Strange creatures and humanoids attack, a crewman vanishes only to return horribly mutilated - and telepathic. Powerful mentalities fear attack from another star system and wish to test out humans. Highly inventive, pace never flags. I enjoyed it.

THE TOME TUNNEL Andrew Harman Legend £4.99

Three con-men priests of St. Lucre the Unwashed are selling after-death insurance and make a killing when failed prognosticator Nostromo predicts world's end. Firkin, Hogshead and Dawn face a death sentence for treading on the grass and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse lose at polo, and the King executes the breeder of a fighting shrimp. A whacky mix of atrocious puns and crazy fantasy. If you like Pratchett, you'll go for this.

FAERY IN SHADOW C.J. Cherryh Legend £4.99

Caith mac Sliabhan, exiled patricidal wanderer and wielder of a cursed sword, roams with young companion Dubhain, a magic-wielding Sidhe. Pursued by a dark creature they gain refuge with Ceannann and Firinne. When Witch Moragacht's horsemen abduct Firinne, Riding on Dubhain who has changed into a horse, Caith sets off to the rescue and is trapped in the black castle of the witch. A sword and sorcery fantasy saga laced with 'Picturesque Speech and Patter' and even more convoluted than Cherryh's normal space operas. Great for S&S lovers.

FORWARD THE FOUNDATION Isaac Asimov Bantam £4.99

Set in the days when Seldon was formulating the theory of psychohistory. First he supports R. Daneel Olivaw (in the guise of First Minister) when rabble-rouser Joranum seeks to overthrow the Emperor. Then Joranum's successor tries again, only to be foiled by a 'rabbit out of the hat'. Next a military junta takes over and the secret of Seldon's wife is revealed. Finally his daughter develops unusual powers and psychohistory gets under way. Long on talk, short on action and with one or two lapses of continuity, it's still an excellent yarn and a 'must' to round out the set.

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE, Emancipation & Beyond Boxtree £7.99

A large zies, graphic novel containing several 'stories'. The main one tells of escaped slaves seeking refuge aboard DS9 and when pursued by their masters, they seek to destroy the inter-Galactic wormhole. Other strips cover a rec trip going wrong, catching a pickpocket and reversing master/servant roles. Reasonably well drawn, but very juvenile scripts.

MUTANT CHRONICLES: FRENZY John-Allen Price Roc £3.99

Set in a future where huge business corporations wage war with private armies. The alien, Dark Legion of Nepharites along with their undead necromutants and human 'heretics', plan to conquer humanity. To further their scheme, they must kidnap Lorraine Kovan, who has been made the 'Receptacle of Visions', from a hospital on a Terraformed Venus - but the Bauhaus Corporation gets there first. A complicated battle scenario for this second volume in the 'Apostle Of Insanity' trilogy.



PAPER TIGER MINIATURES £3.99 each

Six hardcover volumes measuring only 100mm by 75mm, each running to 48 pages and holding full-colour reproductions of work by top fantasy artists. The superb paintings are accompanied by brief comments akin to those top-of-the-store lead-ins. Rather over-the-top, but totally fitting alongside the incredible landscapes, creatures and people in the stunning artwork. Pick one or all from, Jim Burns, Rodney Matthews, Bruce Pennington, Boris Vallejo, Tim White or Patrick Woodroffe; all winners, so you can't go wrong.

**SHADOWRUN: NOSFERATU Carl Sargent & Marc Gascoigne Roc £3.99**

Another tale in the series set in 2055 where magic, trolls, orcs and elves are common. The elfin mage, Serrin Shamander escapes a kidnap attempt and sets out to find who is after him. He is aided by the troll, Tom, the computer wizard Michael and African girl Kirsten. The trail leads to a hideous vampire, with evil plans for humanity. To complicate matters there are other players in the game. A yarn full of action in which interest never flags.

THE DOLPHINS OF PERN Anne McCaffrey Bantam £14.99

In Pern's early days, humans and dolphins worked together but the bond was lost with the Thread-caused regression. Then fisherman Alemi and young Readis are shipwrecked in a storm, to their amazement they are rescued by dolphins which can speak. Inter-species contact is resumed, but Readis' mother doesn't want him mixing with dolphins.

Despite her objections he eventually becomes a 'Dolphineer'. One good Pern deserves another and this is a good one - apart from the unlikely premise that the dolphins would have waited 2,000 years to resume contact. Yo ho ho and a bucket of kiar.

BEAUTIFUL SOUP Harvey Jacobs Ringpull Price not issued

In an age where everything, including humans, is bar-coded, business tycoon James Wander, an A+, has his forehead accidentally re-branded as a can of soup. Shunned by his children, attacked by a hungry tramp, he loses his job and his wife. The law won't help and an illegal operation attempt gets him committed to an asylum where he is assaulted and brain-washed and almost murdered. The next step is to jail where things start to worsen... An 'anything goes' black comedy which keeps you hooked to find out what will happen next.

THE AVENGERS Patrick Macnee Titan £3.99

First in a new series featuring the original Avengers, John Steed and Emma Peel. Steed is called upon to find out who is altering overseas editions of British newspapers in order to stir up

anti-British feelings among friendly nations. He and Emma follow a dangerous trail which leads to the xenophobic 'Brotherhood', an organisation planning to overthrow the Government. Written in a smooth, occasionally camp style perfectly matching the mood of the TV series. I loved that and I thoroughly enjoyed this one.

