

newsletter



The Bulletin of The Irish Science Fiction Association

June/July 1981

Welcome to another year! The Association is now in its sixth year and we hope to go on for a good while yet. A lot has happened since the last newsletter so I'll get down to business.

THE COMMITTEE: The new I.S.F.A. committee, accepted by the Annual General Meeting in May is as follows: Chairman & Editor of 'Stargate' - Pearse Mooney

Secretary, Treasurer & Editor of the Newsletter - Brendan Ryder

Publicity Officer: Sharon O'Doherty

Librarian: Mary Gallagher

Also on the committee are Bridget Anthony and Paddy O'Connell but as these were unavailable recently no post has yet been allocated to them.

The above members were the only ones to be nominated by a very low turnout at the A.C.M. and we would ask members to remember that, of all the meetings in the year, the A.C.M. is by far the most important - so let's see a full turnout next year! A vote of thanks is due to the outgoing committee members for their work in the Association - Eoin Bairead, Rita Meehan, and P.J. Coode. All left due to other commitments.

RECENT MEETINGS:

June: this meeting had a quiz as the main attraction. It went down rather well, with Frank Roche winning the first prize of £5.00 and David Lass coming second with Sharon O'Doherty third.

July: was not quite what we had hoped due to the main attraction being called away. A demonstration game of 'Dungeons and Dragons' was planned and eventually this did take place. For anyone who's interested there will be a game in The Parliament inn next month. Contact the committee at the August meeting.

Upcoming meetings:

This year will have some interesting meetings and we look forward to a large attendance at all of them. At the moment the meetings until Christmas are planned but ideas are most welcome for the January to April dates. The meeting for May should be the presentation of the awards for the 'Aishling Ueal' short story awards, entries for which are now being accepted.

August: This will feature a talk by the writer on my 'experiences' at the upcoming Aucon '81, to be held in Coventry at the end of August. To allow for this, the meeting has been moved to the following Sunday, in the same place and same time. To show the members who haven't been to a convention what they're missing, a slide show will also take place of photographs I will take at the con.

September: This is the month the Space Shuttle is due to go into space for the second time, and to acknowledge this there will be a talk given by a member on the implications

possibilities opened up by the spacecraft. Again, there will be slides shown.

The rest of the year will have the following exciting (!) items: a talk by each of our patrons, Harry Harrison, Anne McCaffrey and James White; a Book Auction; a Quiz; a play (possibly around Christmas if there is enough interest) and anything else we can think of!

Video Club: We hope to start this very soon. It will be once a month, probably the second Sunday in The Parliament Inn. It will feature a Science Fiction film of some sort - we will not know which one until it arrives in the post due to the organisation of the club which we are joining. However, any members who have left their phone numbers with us will be notified. The films which we will be getting are: Superman, Star Trek- The Motion Picture, Alien, Saturn 3, Logan's Run etc. More info. next n/l.

MEMBERSHIPS: There are a lot of renewal notices going out this time and we look forward to receiving your renewed support. Don't forget the long standing offer to non-committee members - get five new members and receive your annual dues back! No-one has yet taken advantage of this so now's your chance to go into the I.S.F.A. history books as the first!

ON THE AIR

TELEVISION:

Dr. Who is back, starting on 3/8/81. BBC, Mondays. Cosmos, with Dr. Carl Sagan, a really excellent programme is available on both RTE and BBC, Tuesday and Wednesdays respectively. The 'Battlestar Galactica' series is being shown on RTE 2 on Sundays and it really isn't as bad as you might imagine. Star Trek, amazingly, isn't on but it should return very soon with a NEW series. SF on television is pretty scarce at the moment but should pick up in the winter months.

RADIO:

A really excellent adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's 'Lord Of The Rings' is now on BBC Radio 4 on Sundays, repeated Wednesdays. It takes a while to get used to the accents of the characters but in the end it's worth it as the sound effects are very realistic. The voice of Collum/Smeagol especially is perfect.

FILMS

There are plenty of good films around at the moment in Dublin, which makes a pleasant change:

'Clash Of The Titans' (Adelphi) 'Time Bandits' (Adelphi) 'Altered States' (Adelphi)
'Raiders Of The Lost Ark' (Carlton) 'Excalibur' (Carlton) 'Superman II' (Carlton)
'Star Wars' (again!) (Classic, Harold's Cross) 'Spider-Man Strikes Back' (Classic, H.C.)

Of these I can recommend 'Superman II' and of course the classic 'Star Wars'. 'Clash Of The Titans' isn't bad but I thought there was something lacking. 'Raiders Of The Lost Ark' isn't strictly SF but it's done by the George Lucas studios and has some SF ideas in it. The rest I haven't seen yet. However, if anyone wants to write a review of any of the aforementioned films, send the results of their labour to any of the committee and we'll put it in the next newsletter or 'Stargate'.

REVIEWS

In reply to the review by John McCarthy of Alfred Bester's 'Golem'¹⁰⁰, in Stargate:

Golem¹⁰⁰ - by Alfred Bester. (London; Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980, £6.95 hdb. 384 pages)

The title of this novel represents a combination of the "Golem" legend (Hebrew word meaning "clay") which was based on the creature raised to life by Rabbi Loewe, head of the Prague Jewish Community in the early 17th Century, to protect them against Christian persecution, together with the theme of "Dystopia" in contemporary SF writing.

The scene is set in a U.S. megacity along the East coast in the year 2175 A.D., when an elite class live in luxury protected by high technology, with the mass of people oppressed by poverty and disease. Eight ladies who meet once a week to play games in order to relieve their lives of boredom, decide to invoke the Devil by using an ancient ritual formula obtained from old books of magic.

As the magic incantations progress, they serve to release the forces of the 'Id' in each of the women, that unconscious source of instinctive energy which demands savage animal satisfaction, according to the Freudian definition. The author expresses it in the equation '8XId Golem'¹⁰⁰, which emerges as a polymorphous quasi-entity, fulfilling in real life crimes all their most primitive sub-conscious desires, without their being aware of it.

This theme was used already in the celebrated SF film "Forbidden Planet" (1956) through the 'Monster of the Id' of Dr. Mobius' sub-conscious mind. However, Alfred Bester develops it on a much wider scale, with a range of remarkable characters from all social classes in the 22nd century.

The novel has two outstanding features apart from its SF qualities, namely a detailed account of the magical invocations listed in English, Latin, French, and Hebrew, within a framework of musical notation; also an extraordinary wealth of illustrations in the text which cause the artist Jack Gaughan to appear on the same level as the best SF & Fantasy illustrators such as Frank Frazzatta, Hannes Blok etc.

These are integrated into the text, in the best tradition of the adult fantasy comic artist, and add greatly to one's enjoyment of the book.

It is by no means an easy read, but I would unhesitatingly recommend it to the serious ISFA member who wishes to broaden his/her horizons, with a mind-blowing piece of fiction, combining both traditional fantasy and modern SF elements.

Reviewed by: David Lass, MA., Dip.Lib.

(Hon. Librarian, The Bram Stoker Soc.)

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED ABOUT
COMPUTERS?

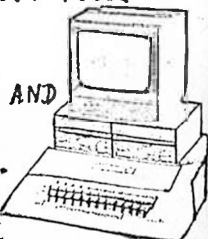
THEY'LL BE PLAYING A BIGGER
 AND BIGGER PART IN OUR LIVES IN
 THE FUTURE.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A GENIUS
 TO LEARN HOW THEY WORK AND
 HOW TO PROGRAM THEM.

THERE IS A PART-TIME COURSE
 STARTING IN THE AUTUMN THAT
 CAN BE ADAPTED TO SUIT YOUR
 PARTICULAR NEEDS.

THE COURSE IS IN BASIC AND
 THE OPERATION OF THE
 APPLE COMPUTER.

RING: DECLAN BRENNAN
 886834 FOR DETAILS



Clone by Richard Cowper. (London; Pan 1972 £1.50)

Basically this book satirises the old style science fiction novels. It even has a touch of Frankenstein in that the clones are a lot different from what their creator had expected. However there is a fairly original story involved, too. The four clones Alvin, Bruce, Colin and Desmond were seperated and not told of each others existance just after they were born. they all turn out to be telepaths, on their own they cannot accomplish much but when together

The book is filled with amusing incidents and one-liners such as "It's enough to make a saint fornicate." You will also notice the author's numerous similes which involve food or the human anatomy. It is now on sale under the Pan Label (first published 1972) and well worth the £1.50 or so you would pay for it here.

Reviewed by: Frank Dignan.

Islands in the Sky by Arthur C. Clarke (London; Puffin Books 1975 £0.45 approx.)

A not too exciting book by Clarke from '54. The book is entertaining nevertheless, as there is little wasted space. It would also help if you have read 'The Sands Of Mars' by the same author. The story concerns a Roy Malcolm, a teen-age boy who is obsessed with aeroplanes and space ships. He wins a competition run by 'World Airlines' and the prize is a trip to a space station which orbits the Earth. While there he befriends various apprentices and they have a few mis-haps and exciting moments.

The space station and various satellites are described in detail and this adds to the realism of the story. This could also explain why there is no big sinister plot involved. I mean, such things do happen in real life, don't they?...

Reviewed by Frank Dignan

Of Time and Stars by Arthur C. Clarke (London; Puffin Books 1976 £0.50 approx.)

Entertaining, though slightly dull in some parts. It is a collection of 18 stories with an introduction by the renowned J.B. Priestly. Generally the stories were good but in my mind four stood out.

'The Nine Billion Names of God'. It is about a bunch of Tibetan monks who believe that the sole purpose of the human race is to find the true name of God. Once accomplished they believed that the human race would have no purpose and be destroyed. To help them they have a computer which meant that a couple of service men had to live up on a rock in Tibet for two months. The story concludes in a quiet and almost ironic way.

'No Morning After' is a humorous story about the destruction of the Earth.

'If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth' is about how man copes with his last refuge - the moon after armageddon.

'Hide And Seek' is a cat and mouse chase in that a spy is trying to escape in a tiny ship while the enemy's fastest battlecruiser is hot on his heels. An enjoyable book and we are likely to see many more collections of this sort as he has worked out that he can have a possible 20,772,773,124,605,000,000 other combinations using his

other short stories.

Reviewed by: Frank Duignan.

The Dragon Lensman by David A. Kyle (Corgi)

This book takes the characters and situations made famous by E.E. 'Doc' Smith and continues their story. As I have not read the original Lensman stories I am at a disadvantage in reviewing the novel as I cannot compare the novel and the series which it is legally plagiarising, in effect. One would think that a talented writer would have the courage to tackle the problems involved in inventing a world of his own, rather than taking over a ready made science fiction universe, and famous at that. Still, it is not without precedent: witness the many others who wrote 'Star Trek' stories for T.V. and later novels connected with the television series.

Be that as it may, the 'Dragon Lensman' is a middling-good book which starts off with Worsel (? ed.), the Dragon Lensman of the title, discovering a machine intelligence on Pok, the planetoid of knowledge. The potential for conflict which this machine intelligence represents is, however, cut short towards the middle of the book by its abrupt expulsion from the story. This is a pity, as the rest of the book is not nearly so interesting. To the author's credit, however, is the fact that the book is so readily understandable without reference to the books of the earlier series.

'The Dragon Lensman' is strictly an action and adventure story: you won't find any new philosophical concepts or ideas here. There is, however, a place for pure story telling in the field of SF and if you want an undemanding good read, 'The Dragon Lensman' will do nicely.

Reviewed by: Mary M. Gallagher

Death Watch by D.G. Compton (Magnum)

This book is a story which contains two victims: the hunter and the hunted. A man is fitted with cameras in his eyes which makes it possible for the television station which employs him to record everything he sees as a television broadcast. He is assigned to do the story of a woman who is about to die in order to do a television series on her last days. As the book starts off, the television employee is seen as the hunter after a good story, and compassion be damned. Katherine Martenhoe, the woman about to die, is his prey and anything that can be done to her to improve the story is fair game. But the man with the television eyes is human too and as he begins to sympathise with the woman we see that he too is a victim of the television station's greed for a good story, and also a victim of the unreasoning public whose appetite for sensation has made him into a hunter for this sensation.

The characterisation in this novel is strong. We see Katherine in a third person narrative and also through the television employees' first person account which alternates with Katherine's. The television employee reveals himself through his first person narrative. As the book progresses the enormity of what is being done to the two protagonists becomes very clear. Neither of them is to escape from this situation; and the television

employee, who at the beginning is seen as an emotionless cruel man-machine, is shown to be as vulnerable and wounded as the dying Katherine. There is some fine writing in this book - don't miss it!

Reviewed by: Mary M. Gallagher.

The following section is one which we had a while ago, and a couple of members requested it's return so here it is. If YOU have anything you want to sell, buy or swap send the details to me or any of the committee and we'll put it in the next issue.

WANTED: (by John Kenny)

Marvel Comics: any American Colour comics or black and white magazines.

D.C. Comics: Any Detective, Batman or Brave and Bold comics.

Anything by Jack Kirby especially New Gods, Forever People, Jimmy Asen and Mr. Miracle. Anything by Neal Adams, any Swamp Thing's.

Charlton Comics: Any Doomsday&l or E-Man's

Atlas Comics: Anything in this line.

Gold Key: Any Star Treks.

Battle: these are not numbered so dates are given.

No.'s 1-48 8th March - 7th February 1976; 50-85 21st February 1976 -

23rd October; 87-90 6th November 1976 - 20th November 1976; 92&93

4th & 11th December 1976; 95-100 25th December 1976 - 29th January 1977

102-107 12th February 1977 - 19th March 1977; 109-116 2nd April - 21st

May 1977; 118-148 4th June - 31st December 1977. Annuals: 1978, '79, '81

Warlord: 1,6-10,14,17,18,27-30,170,216,218,219,221,222,224,231,239,243,245,263,
295,296,325,336, Annual 1979

2000 A.D.: 1,4,6,7,10-13,17-21,28,30-33,35-38,40,42,43,45,47,48,50,53,55,71,72,
76,95-97,99,100,104,105,120,122,135,136,149

Any annuals: 1980, Judge Dread Annual 1981, Dan Dare Annual 1979

Summer Special 1977 1978

Starlord: 22, last issue, Any annuals.

Tornado: 5,6,13-17,19,20,22,23

Titans (weekly) : 5,7,8,11,12,14,17,19,21,23,24-26,30,35,36,44,50,52

Captain Britain: 4,9-12,14,15,20,21-23,28,29,31-34

Hulk Weekly: 4,7,10-13,17-21,25-27,30,33-40,43-46,48,49,52,53,55,56-62

MAD: 105,107-109,111,113,115,117,118,120,129-131,138-140,142,144,145,158,170-173
177,178,181,192,199

Starburst:8

World War II: 29-31,33,34,36,38,40,46-51,53-57,59

Freak Bros. : 1,2,

Elfquest: 1,3-7,

First Kingdom: 1-13

Spirit: 1-5,8,9,11-16,18,19,21

