



THE NEW MILLENNIAL HARBINGER

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Published by John Bangsund PO Box 357 Kingston ACT 2604
Australia for the Apa Without No Rules Atall

The seventh issue of NMH was published in July 1969 for ANZAPA. NMH was my first apazine, and for various dimly-perceived reasons it seems appropriate to resurrect it for this new apa, or, as Murray so pleasantly describes it, this quarterly gathering of fans.

Thank you, Murray, for this felicitous notion, and for inviting me to join. What you and Bob Macaulay have written in Knip Knop 1 has set off some what I am pleased to call ideas in my mind (or mind, as I call it), and this 'issue' will be, if not exactly a comment, at least a reaction to KK 1.

My very first fanzine was a thing called Australian Science Fiction Review, which emerged in June 1966, went like a rocket for a year (the first anniversary issue was no.10), slowed down a bit thereafter (second anniversary no.16) and disappeared entirely in 1969. Towards the end of 1969 it re-emerged as Scythrop ('formerly ASFR'), but in a very real sense the new name symbolized not just a change of direction but the beginnings of a profound change of attitude towards fandom. The fanzine which really continued ASFR was Bruce Gillespie's SF Commentary. (Like ASFR, SFC has been twice on the Hugo ballot. Unlike ASFR, SFC appears with almost breathtaking frequency. No.39 has just reached me, it is as good as any issue Bruce has done - and it came airmail from New Castle, Indiana. Nothing, it seems, absolutely nothing puts Bruce off his stride.)

Scythrop, I now realize, was as much a continuation of The New Millennial Harbinger as of ASFR. Leigh Edmonds started ANZAPA (or APA-A, as it was called for the first few mailings) in 1968. For the first mailing I produced NMH 1 - and I enjoyed doing it so much that I began to realize I had somehow got on the wrong track with ASFR. Publishing fanzines could be fun! Since then I have published (from memory) 7 issues of NMH, 10 of Crog!, 4 each of Lodbrog and Bundalohn Quarterly, a stack of one-shots, and 25 issues of Philosophical Gas. I have just finished Scythrop 28 - the final issue - and am about halfway through PG26. For quite some time the various titles have been virtually interchangeable; discussion of the same subject by pretty much the same people has continued from Scythrop to PG to BQ and so on; and in effect I have been publishing the same fanzine under different titles.

There has been a good reason for each title change. Bundalohn Quarterly was to be my FAPazine, for example, and Revolting Tales of Sex & Super-Science (which I note I haven't mentioned back there) my AFRICAPazine. But gradually each new publication has merged with the others. The fusion is complete now, with Scythrop's incorporation in Philosophical Gas.

But about this 'profound change of attitude'... As has so often happened, Lee Harding said it long before I realized I felt it. In NMH3 (Dec 68) he wrote: 'Offhand I suppose I could think of a round dozen reasons for ASFR to fold; I had thought that ASFR17 was the best reason yet. But now you've gone one better. The no.2 Harbinger is so good it makes me wonder why you persist in this pose of Guardian of SF.' A little exaggerated, I still feel, but that's Lee's style - and he was basically dead right. With Scythrop and the apazines I gradually got further away from science fiction. Towards the end of 1970 I suffered a disastrous relapse when I launched (launched? - glug! gurgle! straight to the bottom) Australian SF Monthly, a journal which I intended to be the basis for a regular Australian prozine-cum-little-magazine. I'm still paying for that sad venture. In the same month that ASFM 1 appeared - December 1970 - Jim Blish published his 'More Issues At Hand', dedicated to Dick Bergeron, Dick Geis, Leland Sapiro and me: 'keepers of the flame'. Guardian of SF, Keeper of the Flame... no, I'm way past that now.

For me there are now three good reasons for publishing fanzines. The most important is that it keeps me in touch with a couple of hundred interesting people around the world, most of whom I regard as friends. The second is that it forces me to write. I can write, and I should write more, but the demands of my mind-rotting job and the delights, frustrations and responsibilities of daily existence would probably keep me away from the typewriter entirely - if it were not for my self-imposed commitment to fandom. And so I find myself writing, and less and less scared of writing about matters of which I am relatively ignorant (because I am amongst friends). The third reason is that it allows me to share with my friends in fandom the writings of other people - George Tumer and Bill Wright, for instance, two of the most delightful writers (in their own utterly different ways) in fandom. But mostly I write for myself: you answer me and I write more for myself. Call it communication, if you like. I think of it as a kind of growing.

(18.11.73)