

The SF CRITIC

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Secret Of The Marauder Satellite, by Ted White. Westminster Press, 1967. \$3.75.

Ted White makes no secret of the fact that he highly admires the juveniles of Robert Heinlein and Lester del Rey. This book shows it; it is a highly competent, never dull novel.

The plot is simple: Paul Williams, recent graduate of the Space Academy, goes to an orbiting space station, has many adventures, and goes a good way toward becoming a man. Of primary appeal to the young, this novel is the prototype of much of the best juvenile sf published. White handles the plot well, and seems to space out his major events in a manner designed to keep the readers interest. The events are, perhaps, too evenly spaced. This is possibly planned, but such exactness led this reader to expect something to happen at even intervals.

Perhaps the largest point of contention was the use of familiar, fannish names for all the characters. The common reader, admittedly, will never have heard of any of them, but this reviewer found himself trying to match up familiar names with familiar characters, a task which shortly became impossible and very confusing.

Aside from these faults, the book is, basically, a well written one, with strongly developed characters, plenty of action, and even, surprisingly for a juvenile, somewhat of a love interest. If you have a son -- or daughter -- whom you want to interest in science fiction, you would do well to whet their appetites for the field with this book.

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The Ganymede Takeover, by Philip Dick & Ray Nelson. Ace Books, 1967. 50¢.

Philip Dick and Ray Nelson have taken a topic which has been written many times before. The influence of Ray Nelson is not particularly noticeable; this is the same Philip Dick whom we have seen in a dozen books published prior to this one. Basically, the nature of reality is under attack. Dick has turned a new leaf. Instead of questioning the concept of reality as impressing itself upon the characters, he has introduced forces which alter the reality which our senses receive and our minds interpret. The characters are, literally, cut off from the reality that is all around them.

For Philip Dick, this is undoubtedly a bold new idea. For many others, it is merely a new switch on a tired old theme. This is, regrettably, a Philip Dick Book, in all the senses of the word.

It's not easy, but if you can separate the searching questions on what is the true nature of reality from the plot, you'll find a fair action-adventure novel concerning a conquered Earth, with one small section still actively fighting the conqueror-aliens. The leader of the rebels is Percy X, a militant Black Power leader (his guerilla troops are called Neegparts). He is alternatively pushed, pulled, catapulted, and kicked into situation after situation. Generally, he portrays a good deal less initiative and inventiveness than the authors credit him with.

Other characters include Ganymedians, members of the World Psychiatric Association, a Dr. Balkani (who might pass in a bright light for a Mad Scientist), and countless

other pawns of the authors. Is this book a good one? The question is, like reality, many sided. On one hand it's a well-developed action-adventure story; on the other, it's another tired old Philip Dick nature-of-reality book, with heroes who fail to live up to heroic standards. You can take your pick: like Star Trek, the avid Dick fans will buy the name rather than the book, and others will deny anything of value can be produced by the use of the Dick Formula.

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Retief's War, by Keith Laumer. Berkley Books, 1967. 60¢.

Keith Laumer is, perhaps, a latter day Robert Silverberg. He writes more novels in a month than many authors write in a year. This, the latest in the Retief (Galactic Diplomat Extraordinaire) series, is as full of action, swashbuckling adventure and thud and blunder as any of this authors' previous works.

Up to page thirty, things are a bit slow. However, the pace picks up considerably after that and never slows down, even for a chapter. The novel, graced with a well-done Richard Powers cover, could perhaps have been heightened by effective use of the original Jack Gaughan illustrations, which illustrated the version originally published in IF. They provide an excellent visual background which Laumer too sparsely fills in, perhaps in the belief that his readers have faithfully followed the entire series.

The Book is well-written entertainment. It is not much meatier than this, but then Laumer seems to be aiming at solid entertainment only. As such, it's the best Keith Laumer has produced in many months.

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IN BRIEF:

The Sunless World, by Neil R. Jones. Ace Books, 1967. 50¢.

Thud and blunder in the grand and glorious tradition of the pulp magazines of the thirties. Cardboard characters, paper mache science, and wierdly alien settings make this book a wonder to the modern science fiction reader. If you're tired of symbolism and/or sex, and want to retreat a few decades, then this is the book for you.

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The Warriors Of Day, by James Blish. Lancer Books, 1967. 60¢.

One of James Blish's lesser science fiction novels, in which the man becomes the symbol, and where the hero is alternately manipulated and manipulative.

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Code Three, by Rick Raphael. Berkley Books, 1967. 60¢.

Based on the stories first published in ANALOG, this is the highly engrossing and scientifically accurate story of the Highway Police of the future. If you like your science heavy, and enjoy a good story built on the "If this goes on..." premise, then this is the book for you. Highly recommended.

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BOOKS RECEIVED:

One Against The Legion, by Jack Williamson. Pyramid Books, 1967. 60¢. Reprint.
The Cometeers, by Jack Williamson. Pyramid Books, 1967. 60¢. Reprint.
Timeslip!, by Murray Leinster. Pyramid Books, 1967. 50¢. TV Series novelization.
The Invaders, by Keith Laumer. Pyramid Books, 1967. 50¢. TV Series novelization.
Tomorrow, The Stars, ed. by Robert Heinlein. Berkley Books, 1967. 75¢. Reprint.
The Day Of The Triffids, by John Wyndham. Crest Books, 1967. 60¢. Reissue
Worlds Of The Imperium, by Keith Laumer. Ace Books, 1967. 45¢. Reissue.
Stranger In A Strange Land, by Robert Heinlein. Avon Books, 1967. 75¢. Reissue.